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# FROM SALERNO TO THE ALPS



# From Salerno to the Alps

*A History of the Fifth Army*

1943-1945



*Edited By*

LIEUTENANT COLONEL CHESTER G. STARR

WASHINGTON

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## FOREWORD

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Anyone who served in Italy during the late war must have been impressed by the rapid growth of legends about the battles of Fifth Army. Even more astounding, when one returned home, was the remarkable amount of misinformation available to the general public on the Italian campaign of 1943-45. Such, at least, was my reaction, which I felt the more keenly inasmuch as I had served almost two years with the Historical Section, Headquarters Fifth Army. On looking back, I discovered that the fog of military censorship had settled down early, for after D-Day at Salerno the American press announced that the U. S. *Seventh(!)* Army had landed in Italy.

This book is, therefore, an effort to provide a careful, reasonably detailed account of the Fifth Army campaign in Italy. Several things this volume does not pretend to be. It is not a study of the high-level strategy or logistics of the Italian campaign. Fifth Army did not originate, and had little influence on the Anglo-American strategy of the European war; it simply carried out the policy, once set. I have tried to indicate the broad outlines of that strategy as far as it is known to me, but its full evaluation must depend on the publication of the records of the Combined Chiefs of Staff and of state papers of the war years.

Again, this work is not a gossip book of the generals or a book of heroes. The generals received their orders from above and made certain necessary decisions to implement the policy; but the bulk of the planning was done by the staffs, and the fighting was done by the men. The names of commanders down to and including regiments have been given in the text chiefly for the sake of reference. Fifth Army had its heroes but the pages of this book are not sufficiently extensive to describe the countless brave exploits which helped to advance our battle.

The casual reader might prefer to have more generalizations and fewer facts than he will find in the following pages. The facts, however, are not easily accessible elsewhere, and I trust that any one with a genuine interest in the subject will gain sufficient information to make up his own mind on the wisdom of the strategy and the tactics. For definitive assessment of mistakes and successes we are not sufficiently removed from the events. Only one thing is clear:

that the men of Fifth Army fought a hard, long battle against the enemy, the weather, and the terrain; and that they won. Just how they went about winning and what the stages of the battle were it is the purpose of this book to recount.

SALERNO TO THE ALPS is essentially a condensation of the nine-volume *Fifth Army History*, which was prepared in full accordance with the principles of historical scholarship; the sources of the latter work are described briefly in the Bibliographical Note at the end of this volume. In condensing the 1,500 pages of the original work, the appendices, repetitious information, and some of the detail on the less interesting actions have been omitted; but an effort has been made to keep the thread of the story clear while concentrating on the major battles.

Although I had a considerable part in the planning, writing, and publishing of the basic work as a member of the Historical Section and then its chief for one year, it should be emphasized that the *Fifth Army History* was a group product to which a number of men contributed their whole-hearted efforts and unselfish enthusiasm. Its text was written chiefly by John Bowditch III, Louis G. Geiger, William D. McCain, Bruce K. Myers, Harris G. Warren, and myself, with the assistance of Arthur T. Freshman, Walter A. Hamilton, Vincent B. Kathe, Robert W. Komer, Roy Lamson, Jr., Sidney T. Matthews, E. Dwight Salmon, and John R. Vosburgh. The maps of this volume have been taken from the original work and were drawn by Andrew H. DeFrancesco, Charles J. Petersen, and Alvin J. Weinberger. Other members of the Section included Sidney T. Buckman, Bernard C. Matheny, William G. Newall, Martin J. Romero, Francis X. Sullivan, and Wilson R. Waring.

Together with its writers the Historical Section had a group of artists: Harry Davis, Frank D. Duncan, Jr., Ludwig Mactarian, Savo Radulovic, Edward A. Reep, Rudolf C. Von Ripper, and Mitchell Siporin. Both the industry and the ability of these artists were remarkable. Some of their work has been included as illustrations in this volume, but a full presentation of their paintings would require a book in itself. For permission to reproduce their work and also the Signal Corps photographs I am indebted to the War Department. In conclusion, I must also express my appreciation to the University of Illinois, for financial and other assistance in the preparation of this book; and, above all, to the editors of the *Infantry Journal*, for their patience and cooperation.

CHESTER G. STARR

Urbana, Illinois

## FROM SALERNO TO THE ALPS



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## CHAPTER I

# PLANNING FOR INVASION

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DURING World War II American soldiers fought and died on many fronts. Their graves lie across the world as a lasting record of the valor and hardships of a long, grueling war which tested the ability of our leaders and the endurance of our soldiers as they had rarely been tried before.

Of all the field armies, Fifth Army spent the longest continuous period in action against the enemy. Created in the field and dedicated to offensive operations, this Army went ashore at Salerno, Italy, on 9 September 1943, and so became the first American force to break an opening into the German Fortress Europe. For twenty months thereafter, less one week, it fought in Italy against a wily enemy, against rocky, mountainous terrain, and against the miseries of snow and cold in its winter offensives. Until the Normandy invasion of June 1944 the Italian campaign received its due attention in the American press. Then it slid into the background as a "holding" front, but the offensive up the Italian Peninsula actually continued to the triumphant days of May 1945, when our troops stood on the Alps and received the first large-scale surrender of German forces in the collapse of Hitler's Reich.

The campaign of Fifth Army has a unity and coherence possessed by few major actions in this war. Confined to the narrow boot of Italy, our battles took place in terrain which had its wide variations and yet possessed an inner similarity. Limited plains sharply bounded by steep mountains; terraced hillsides with their olive groves and vineyards; close-packed stone villages; twisting, narrow roads—these were everywhere that Fifth Army went. The monotonous cycle of the weather, alternating between dusty, hot summers and wet winters which turned creeks into raging torrents, quickly became familiar and unpleasant. The enemy fought us from one fortified defensive line after another, each one farther up the Peninsula but all much alike in their bunkers, mines, and machine-gun positions; the German divisions soon grew to be old acquaintances, for movement out of the Italian theater was rare on both sides. Reinforcements for this minor front likewise were few, and "exhaustion" became an almost meaningless term to our soldiers, who still fought on.

In only one respect did the campaign of Fifth Army lack

unity: no other American army ever had so international an aspect. At one time or another British, French, Italian, and Brazilian units were under its command, and usually the foreign elements comprised close to half of its strength. This composite character in itself adds interest to the action; whatever their nationality, the men of Fifth Army fought together as free men against tyranny. The battles of Fifth Army which carry a ring of undying valor—Salerno, Cassino, Anzio, the Gothic Line—are truly international victories.

The story of Fifth Army really begins with our landings in French North Africa on 8 November 1942. The Western Task Force, which sailed directly from the United States, struck at Casablanca, French Morocco; the Center Task Force (II Corps) from England landed at Oran, Algeria; the Eastern Task Force, largely British, stormed the port of Algiers. By 11 November the French command in North Africa had capitulated, and our forces started their drive east toward Tunisia.

The immediate objective of the landings in North Africa was to secure control of the French territories in that area. Over and beyond that objective were the further aims of driving Axis forces out of Africa, of opening up the Mediterranean, and even of carrying the war to Europe itself. While American, British, and French troops spent the winter and spring of 1943 in Tunisia, fighting against the Germans and Italians under Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, the broader plans were being refined and implemented.

One important and early step was the activation of the United States Fifth Army, as planned several months before our landings. On 8 December 1942 a War Department letter addressed to the Commanding General, European Theater of Operations (Lt. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower), constituted Fifth Army, effective 1 December. Its personnel and equipment were to be drawn from the Western Task Force, II Corps, and other available sources. Further directives came from Theater Headquarters (12 December), and from Allied Force Headquarters (30 December), in control of Allied units in North Africa. In compliance with these directives Fifth Army was activated at Oujda, French Morocco, on 5 January 1943, one minute past midnight. Initially its basic organization comprised I Armored Corps in French Morocco, II Corps in Western Algeria, and XII Air Support Command. The first

commanding general, Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark, who had previously been Deputy Commander-in Chief, Allied Force, was to remain in command of Fifth Army throughout its training and operations down to 16 December 1944.

## 1. MISSIONS AND TRAINING

The initial missions of Fifth Army were prescribed in the directive from Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ). Fifth Army was to prepare a well organized, well equipped, and mobile striking force with at least one infantry division and one armored division fully trained in amphibious operations. It was to insure, in co-operation with French forces, the integrity of all territory of French Morocco and of Algeria west of a north-south line through Orléansville, to act with French civil and military authorities in the preservation of law and order, and to assist in organizing, equipping, and training French forces. Finally, Fifth Army was to prepare plans for and execute special operations under directives issued by the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Force.

Even before the activation of Fifth Army, on 24 December 1942, General Eisenhower had notified the commanding generals of Twelfth Air Force, the Center Task Force, the Western Task Force, and the Northern Task Force that Fifth Army would be activated at an early date with General Clark commanding and that these forces would come under his command in the preparation of plans for the occupation of Spanish Morocco in event of Spanish hostility or if Spain should fail to resist German invasion. The plan provided for the Center Task Force from the southern Mediterranean coast to launch an overland operation to capture Melilla, the Western Task Force to conduct an overland operation from the Port Lyautey area to capture Tangier, and the Northern Task Force by an amphibious operation to occupy the International Zone which bordered the Strait of Gibraltar on the south. The limited forces available for the execution of this plan were a matter of much concern to Fifth Army during the first part of 1943, but the situation was much relieved after the visit of General Orgaz of Spanish Morocco to Fifth Army Headquarters in Oujda early in June, where parades and demonstrations involving the use of paratroopers and air force units were staged.

This mission was secondary; in its primary task Fifth Army was committed to one of the hardest operations in modern war-

fare—an amphibious movement in force to land on a defended hostile shore. Aside from its routine responsibilities of controlling substantial portions of Morocco and Algeria its mission had initially been defined to be that of a mobile striking force with emphasis strongly placed on amphibious operations. Its ultimate employment in the first American landing on the mainland of Europe stemmed naturally from its careful preparation for just such a type of campaigning. The Army very early in its career began a highly specialized program of training to develop the skills and to increase the mobility necessary for landing operations, building on the experience gained in the North African landings and grounding all units in the complicated techniques of amphibious movements. These require both technical proficiency and the highest sort of discipline, physical hardihood, and initiative, and thorough training was undertaken in order that the men sent into forthcoming battles would be ready for the test.

In addition to the training carried on within the units of Fifth Army, eight training centers were created to handle instruction in vital subjects and in new techniques throughout the Army, based on deficiencies observed in the Tunisian campaign and on the intended employment of Fifth Army. The chief of these centers was the Invasion Training Center, established on 14 January 1943 at Port-aux-Poules, Algeria. The training here consisted of individual and unit instruction of the regimental combat teams and the armored combat commands which were to be used in prospective landings, and also covered combined operations of those troops with the U. S. Navy, the Army Air Forces, and the 1st Engineer Amphibian Brigade. The aim at this center was to develop aggressive, fast-moving, hard-hitting, sustained action. Other centers specialized on airborne troops, leadership and battle training, field officers, tank destroyers, engineers, air observation, and the training of the new French divisions being raised in North Africa as to technical handling of American equipment.

## 2. THE DECISION ON ITALY

While the Army trained, its staff began to consider several projects for the invasion of Axis territory in Europe, especially from the middle of June 1943. After the final capitulation of Axis forces in Tunisia on 13 May, the Allies prepared to invade Sicily. This operation (Husky) was entrusted to the U.S. Seventh Army

and the British Eighth Army, and was launched on 10 July. Even before our troops went ashore on the southern beaches of Sicily, the planners were considering further operations, limited on the one hand by the fact that seven divisions were to be withdrawn to the United Kingdom from the Mediterranean by 1 November 1943 and encouraged on the other by the apparent weakness of Italy, which should be exploited. Shortly before Operation Husky was launched, the Combined Chiefs of Staff directed General Eisenhower to prepare plans for the next mission, which was to eliminate Italy from the war and contain the maximum number of German divisions.

In view of the military resources that might be available after the Sicilian campaign the alternatives at the end of June appeared to be either an amphibious attack on one of several places on the Italian mainland or an operation against the island of Sardinia. Decision depended on the strength of Axis resistance in Sicily and on political developments in Italy, both uncertain factors. If Italian morale proved to be low at the end of our Sicilian attack, General Eisenhower stated that he would recommend an assault on the Italian mainland with six divisions. If his appreciation were that this attack could not occupy the heel of the Peninsula or exploit as far as Naples, he would then recommend the assault on Sardinia.<sup>1 \*</sup>

Initial plans for the invasion of Italy, which contemplated a crossing from Messina into the toe and a coordinated amphibious attack on the instep, were largely in British hands. On 10 June General Eisenhower directed Fifth Army to prepare plans for the Sardinian operation. Study of the problem was begun in conjunction with the naval and air headquarters, but on 20 July General Eisenhower cabled General Clark to cease planning for Sardinia. The Combined Chiefs of Staff had three days previously expressed their interest in the possibilities of a direct amphibious operation against Naples, for the collapse of the Italian forces in Sicily brought the expectation that Italy could be eliminated from the war by rapid and continued attacks on the mainland. The fall of Mussolini from power on 25 July strengthened this expectation and made our planners bolder. On 26 July the Combined Chiefs of Staff cabled General Eisenhower, urging that he plan at once for the Naples operation. On the same date the meetings of the Commanders-in-Chief of the Mediterranean at Tunis had deter-

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\*Footnotes are at the end of each chapter.

mined to rush preparations for this attack if it could possibly be executed.

Fifth Army was accordingly directed on 27 July to develop plans for the seizure of Naples and the nearby airfields "with a view to preparing a firm base for further offensive operations." The target date for the operation (given the code name of Avalanche) would be 7 September, and a brief outline plan was to be submitted by 7 August. The directive specified that joint commanders for navy and air should be appointed by the chiefs of those services in the Mediterranean and that General Clark should coordinate his plans with the joint commanders. While the planning and mounting of Avalanche were to be carried out under the direction of AFHQ, the execution of the operation was to be under the command of 15th Army Group, the group headquarters command which had been set up under General Sir Harold R. L. G. Alexander to coordinate the operations of Seventh and Eighth Armies in Sicily. Since the British Eighth Army would probably be involved in the Italian campaign also, an army group headquarters appeared necessary.

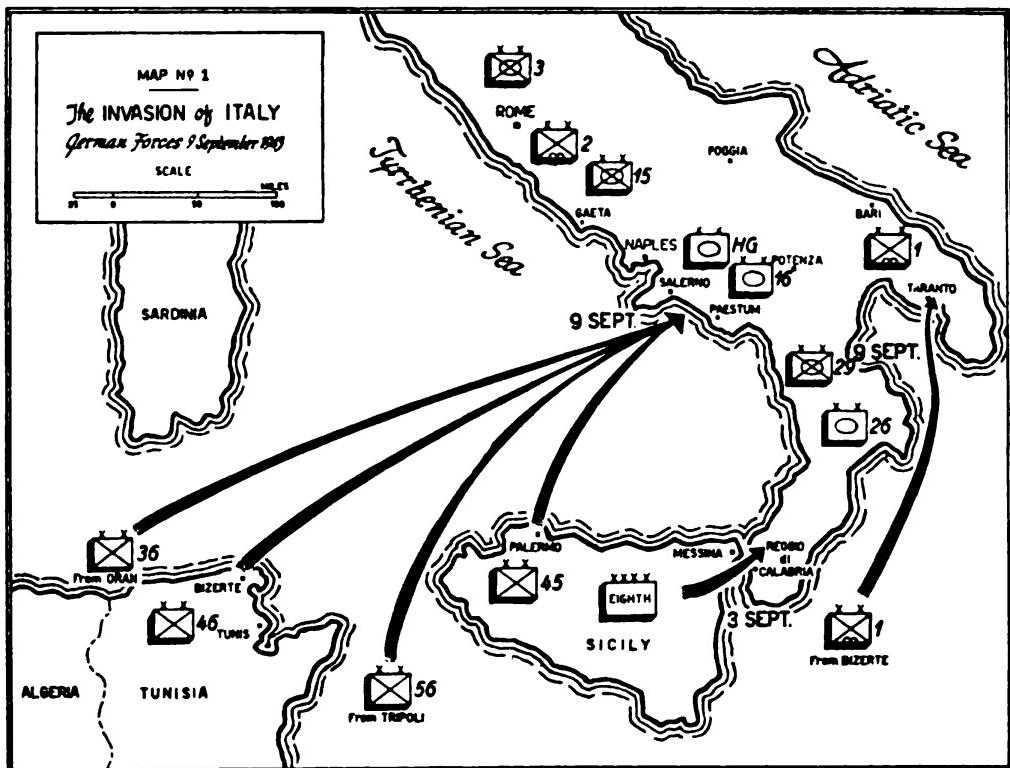
During August the staff of Fifth Army worked feverishly on the plans for Avalanche. On 16 August the Commanders-in-Chief decided definitely that Eighth Army would invade the toe of Italy from Sicily as early as possible. The Sicilian campaign was successfully concluded on the 17th; the date for the next attack would be set by General Alexander. The Avalanche operation would take place on 9 September, but might be postponed for not more than forty-eight hours if necessary. At this time another factor arose to influence our main lines of strategy—the possibility of an Italian armistice. For several weeks the progress of the negotiations with Italian representatives affected our forthcoming operations. If the armistice were accepted, the prospects of success for Avalanche would be greater, but no one could predict what result the removal of Italian forces would have on German resistance in the peninsula. While our negotiations were going on, General Clark drew up a list of items to secure from the armistice. Chief among them was the demand that the Italians continue to man the coastal defenses and not turn them over to the Germans, a condition that the Italians were not able to fulfill because of German pressure. Once signed, the armistice was not to be announced until we should give out the news. The timing of this announcement was important to Avalanche, now definitely set.

### 3. THE PLANS FOR AVALANCHE

The drafting of detailed plans for a major amphibious attack is a complicated operation in itself. A large volume of material must be assembled, evaluated, and coordinated; the vital and complicated matters of supply must be worked out; detailed loading tables must be prepared. In the Fifth Army planning for Avalanche, three problems particularly stood out: shipping, the area of attack, and airborne support.

With regard to shipping, landing craft were especially limited. The ground forces initially made available to Fifth Army for Operation Avalanche comprised the American VI Corps (34th and 36th Infantry Divisions, 1st Armored Division, and 82d Airborne Division) and the British 10 Corps (46 and 56 Infantry Divisions, 7 Armoured Division, and 1 Airborne Division).<sup>2</sup> Since 10 Corps was already engaged in plans for another possible landing on the toe of Italy, it was suggested that 10 Corps devise a loading plan suitable for either operation and fit this plan into Avalanche. General Clark opposed such an arrangement, for the 10 Corps plan called for the use of all available LSTs; thus the 36th Division, selected to lead the VI Corps assault, would not have a sufficient amount of suitable landing craft. He considered it necessary to have part of the 36th Division Artillery, attached tank and tank destroyer units, and some engineers carried in LSTs. As a result of his insistence three LSTs were promised, and the number was increased from time to time as more craft became available, each increase forcing a revision in the loading plans. Ultimately 15 LSTs were allotted for the 36th Division and attached troops. The 179th RCT from the 45th Infantry Division was then added to be a floating reserve, and additional craft were finally obtained to lift that force from Sicily. Even after these arrangements had been completed, two battalions of the 157th Infantry were inserted in the troop list and were brought in the D-day convoy.

The target date had been set on the basis of two factors: the phase of the moon and the availability of landing craft. Since the landing craft had already been used in Sicily, some time was required to repair the ravages of action and to make them serviceable; however desirable it might be to exploit Italian weakness, a full-scale attack simply could not be launched until early September. Yet General Clark was eager to set the date as early as possible to avoid the gales and deterioration of weather normal to October. D-day was finally fixed for 9 September, when the moon would set at 0100, well before H-hour (0330).<sup>3</sup>



A major question was the site for the Avalanche landings. The possibilities were the Gulf of Salerno area south of Naples and the Gulf of Gaeta north of Naples. (See Maps 1 and 4.) The latter region offered two beach strips, one north and the other south of the Volturno River. The AFHQ directive of 27 July specified the Salerno area for several reasons, chief among them being the fact that it lay within the range of air support from bases in Sicily. Beach study by G-2 indicated that the character of the beaches was better at Salerno than on the coast north of Naples, where small streams have built up a shelf at their mouths and an extensive offshore shoal.

The advantages, however, of better fighter cover and of more favorable beach conditions at Salerno were offset by the fact that the terrain and the tactical situation favored the Volturno region. In contrast to the broad Campanian Plain with its flat expanse and numerous roads to the north of Naples, the shallower and narrower plain south of Salerno is ringed and dominated by a great mountain mass providing observation and commanding positions for the enemy. If we did not secure the passes leading from this plain into the Campanian Plain in our first rush, the drive to Naples through the mountains might prove slow and costly. Another argument for landing in the Volturno area was the tactical consideration that

a foothold there would cut Naples off from the German forces in central and northern Italy. These considerations led the enemy to expect us to land in the Volturno region, the beaches of which were more heavily mined than at Salerno. In fact, after the Avalanche landings had taken place, the Germans left elements of two divisions on the coast either side of the Volturno for three days in the expectation that we would also land in that district.<sup>4</sup>

When General Clark received the directive to plan for Avalanche, he examined the landing possibilities and was impressed with the area north of Naples. The longer he studied the terrain and the situation, the more convinced he grew that the area of the Gaeta coast, especially the beach strip south of the Volturno, was preferable to the Salerno region. He saw the advantage of the absence of mountains north of Naples and the opportunity to drop airborne troops on his left along the Volturno and thus block the access roads from the north, down which German reinforcements would have to come. Following an air drop he could get his infantry in touch with the airborne division very early and reunite his forces. So strong was General Clark's conviction that the landing should be north of Naples and that it could be supported adequately by air strength that he flew twice to Algiers to discuss the problem. He forcibly presented the case for a landing south of the Volturno and found all factors favorable except for lack of firm assurances from the air officers that they could furnish air cover that far from the Sicilian airfields. Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder was away, and none of the staff of Air Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean would make an official commitment on the possibility of air cover north of Naples, though unofficially they held it feasible. When General Clark did reach Air Marshal Tedder, the latter returned a negative to the question, so the site north of Naples was abandoned.<sup>5</sup>

The complexity and the difficulty of planning operations of such magnitude as a large landing in force on a defended coast are nowhere more clearly shown than in the employment of the airborne component of the assault. The original AFHQ directive of 27 July allotted two airborne divisions to Fiftn Army, the 1 Airborne Division and the 82d Airborne Division. General Clark desired to drop one division on the southern edge of the Naples plain, north of Vietri-sul-Mare and southeast of Mt. Vesuvius. This force could control the northern mouths of the passes across the Sorrento Ridge and thus prevent the two German

*panzer* (armored) divisions in the Naples area from crossing to oppose us in the plain of Salerno.

Neither the airborne division commanders nor the troop-carrier commander would approve of trying a drop on that zone, for they would agree only to make the dropping run from the sea and could expect the heaviest of flak and the obstacle of the mountains at the end of their run. Since General Clark was unable to convince the air commanders that the run could be made in the opposite direction, this airborne objective had to be abandoned. Accordingly the Ranger force had to be sent up from Maiori to take the Sorrento Ridge and had to be maintained there with great difficulty. Later the 1 Airborne Division was taken away from the Fifth Army troop allotment, placed initially in Army reserve, and finally removed entirely; it eventually landed from the sea at Taranto on 9 September.

General Clark then decided to drop a task force of the 82d Airborne Division in the Volturno Valley to destroy the bridges over the river from Triflisco to the sea and to prevent the moving of German forces from the north. The airborne troops were to delay enemy forces crossing the Volturno and were to concentrate at Capua, thence withdrawing southeast along the high ground to rejoin elements of Fifth Army. The chances appeared to be good for an early junction of the paratroopers with the landing force. At one stage of the planning it was proposed to handle the resupply of this task force through nightly drops while it was separated from the infantry, using bombers for the purpose if the enemy defenses in the area were still heavy.

The next alteration in the airborne plan came on 1 September, when it was decided to reduce the 82d Airborne Division force from a strongly reinforced regimental combat team to a regimental combat team less one battalion. The reason for this reduction was the apparent impossibility of maintaining resupply for the larger force from the air. With the force reduced by one battalion, a greater quantity of supplies could be carried in the initial drop. The mission for the reduced force, which was to drop by parachute and glider on the night of D minus 1 to D-day, was to seize and destroy the Capua bridge over the Volturno and then to retire southeast as previously planned. One reinforced regimental combat team of the 82d Airborne Division was tentatively placed in the Army floating reserve; the remainder of the division was to come by sea from Sicily with the follow-up troops.

Shortly before Fifth Army left Africa, General Clark attended a conference with General Eisenhower in Sicily. The negotiations for the armistice with Italy were in their final stages, and an Italian general was present. The latter urged that we make an air drop on Rome to secure the airfields, for Marshal Badoglio was insisting that an Allied force be placed in Rome to protect the government against German troops near the capital. Accordingly, when it was decided at the conference to carry out an airborne operation in Rome at the time of Avalanche, the 82d Airborne Division was taken from the Fifth Army striking force on 3 September, though it was to remain under command of General Clark. To provide for this new plan the Volturno airborne operation had to be sacrificed, but changed conditions in the Rome area eventually prevented any drop there. That the employment of the division as originally scheduled would have been operationally valuable is indicated by the fact that parts of three German divisions crossed the Volturno and marched down unopposed to throw their weight against Fifth Army.

After final decisions had been reached as to the area of attack, the shipping available, and the employment of the airborne troops, the outline plan for Avalanche was completed in mid-August together with companion air and naval plans. The mission of Fifth Army remained as given in the AFHQ directive: to seize the port of Naples and to secure the nearby airfields with a view to preparing a firm base for further offensive operations. To carry out this mission Fifth Army planned to employ the British 10 Corps under Lt. Gen. Sir Richard L. McCreery and the American VI Corps under Maj. Gen. Ernest J. Dawley in simultaneous assaults on the beaches south of Salerno to secure the Salerno plain and then swing northwest to Naples. A floating reserve was set up, consisting in the end of two regimental combat teams of the 45th Division from Sicily. Follow-up troops included the rest of the 45th Division, the 34th Division, the 13th Field Artillery Brigade, the 1st or 2d Armored Division, the 82d Airborne Division, the British 7 Armoured Division, and many supporting troops; in all, Fifth Army would have 100,000 British troops and 69,000 American troops. The maintenance for both corps was to be primarily over the beaches until the port of Naples became available, though 10 Corps might count on a small amount of supply through the port of Salerno.

In detail, the first waves of both corps were to hit the beaches

at H-hour, set at 0330, 9 September. (*See Map 2.*) 10 Corps on the left was to deliver the Fifth Army main assault with the mission of capturing Naples. Immediate objectives were the port of Salerno, the Montecorvino airfield, the important rail and highway center of Battipaglia, and Ponte Sele on Highway 19 over the Sele River. The 10 Corps zone extended nearly 25 miles from Maiori around the coast to the mouth of the Sele River. The left flank was entrusted to three battalions of Rangers and two battalions of Commandos, all under Lt. Col. William O. Darby. The Rangers were to land at Maiori and advance north to seize the Mt. di Chiunzi pass and the broad Nocera-Pagani pass between Salerno and Naples. The Commandos were to land at Vietri, turn east along the coastal road, and occupy Salerno. Meanwhile the bulk of 10 Corps would land on three beaches south of Picentino Creek, with the 56 Division under Maj. Gen. G. W. R. Templer on the right and the 46 Division under Maj. Gen. J. L. I. Hawkesworth taking over the center of the corps zone. A gap of more than ten miles lay between the 56 Division and the beaches of VI Corps to the south. This gap would be closed as the two corps moved inland, and the junction of forces was planned to take place at Ponte Sele.

VI Corps was to make the southern assault with the 36th Division (reinforced) under Maj. Gen. Fred L. Walker. Two regimental combat teams were to land at H-hour on four beaches just west of the ancient temples of Paestum, advance to the railroad, reorganize, and move on to their objectives. On the left the objective of the 142d Regimental Combat Team was the high ground running in an arc from Ponte Sele through Altavilla Silentina, Albanella, and Rocca d'Aspide to Mt. Vesole and Magliano. On the right the 141st Regimental Combat Team was to maintain contact with the 142d Infantry at Mt. Vesole and Magliano and occupy key points in the mountain arc to Agropoli at the southern end of the Gulf of Salerno.

The final beaches for both corps were by no means ideal for an amphibious operation. The arc of mountains enclosing the plain of Salerno was too far from the beaches for the assaulting troops to reach before daylight. Even after a successful landing the Allied forces would have to defend an open plain under possible constant enemy observation and artillery fire. Yet certain favorable characteristics made the selection advisable. The offshore gradient permitted transports to come close to shore; the strip of sand be-

tween the water and the dune line was fairly narrow and made the construction of exit routes relatively easy; the low dunes themselves offered no serious obstacle to bulldozers; and the existing road net lay close to the beaches. Finally, the terrain immediately behind the beaches was suitable for the dispersion of dumps.

#### 4. THE ENEMY BEFORE US

To counter the Fifth Army invasion the enemy could rely on eight German divisions. (See Map 1.) Two of these were in or north of Rome, two others were in the vicinity of Naples, and the other four were south of Naples. Most of the divisions had incurred heavy losses in personnel and especially in equipment in Sicily.

On 8 September the 16th Panzer Division was in the Eboli-Battipaglia area, where it had moved some ten days previously from the southeast coast of Italy near Bari. At that time it had taken over some of the Italian beach defenses; it occupied the rest on the news of the Italian armistice. In general the 16th Panzer Engineer Battalion held the Sorrento Peninsula; the 64th *Panzer Grenadier* (Armored Infantry) Regiment, the area from Salerno to the Sele; and the 79th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, the sector from the Sele River to Agropoli. The 2d Panzer Regiment at Battipaglia was in position to strike with its tanks either west or south on Highway 18.

German defenses of the immediate landing areas were not especially well organized. Some minefields were laid along the beaches, barbed-wire obstacles were erected, numerous machine guns were sited to cover the most likely landing spots, and a few artillery pieces were emplaced inland. The Germans apparently put considerable faith in the ability of tanks, roving behind the beaches, to throw a landing operation into confusion. Furthermore, with unexcelled observation posts on such terrain features as the great bulk of Mt. Soprano overlooking the Paestum beaches, the enemy could direct artillery fire upon the plain, the beaches, and landing craft beyond. An Italian-laid minefield in the Gulf of Salerno prevented convoys from approaching close to shore and would be a hazard to the landing craft.

Of the other German units the Hermann Goering Panzer Division was apparently dispersed in the plain of Naples from Caserta south, and the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division was probably northwest of this force, generally in the Gaeta area. Both units had been reorganizing after their losses in Sicily. The 2d Parachute

Division garrisoned the vicinity of Rome from Colli Laziali on the south to the rail junction of Viterbo on the north; the movement of this division into the Rome area had been the chief factor deterring the proposed drop of the 82d Airborne Division at Rome immediately after the announcement of the Italian armistice. Some elements of the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division were at Frascati south of Rome, probably to guard the headquarters of Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, commanding the German forces in central and southern Italy, but most of this division was apparently well north of Rome as far as Orvieto.

Three enemy divisions remain to be considered. One of these, the 1st Parachute Division, held the Adriatic coast with part of its strength south of Bari. The other two, generally speaking, were in Calabria, but only to a minor extent in direct contact with Eighth Army, which had landed at Reggio di Calabria against slight opposition on 3 September. At the end of August the 26th Panzer Division was located halfway up the toe. Headquarters and some troops of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division were at Potenza, but Eighth Army met part of its 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment not far from Reggio on 4 September.

It does not appear that any major shifts were being made at the moment when the enemy learned of the approach of Fifth Army to the Gulf of Salerno. Warning orders were undoubtedly transmitted on 8 September to all units, but actual execution of these orders did not follow until after our landing early on the morning of the 9th. Then German motors began to roar, and column after column swung out onto the roads of southern Italy, driving rapidly north toward the plain of Salerno.

Meanwhile the 16th Panzer Division had received warning of what lay ahead. On 8 September the Chief of Staff, Italian XIX Corps, informed Headquarters, Port Defense, at Salerno: "From 2330/7 hrs inst. this zone is declared to be in 'coastal alarm' following departure of enemy convoy from Sicily heading for Salerno." At 1600, 8 September, the 16th Panzer Division was informed that 36 ships escorted by destroyers had been sighted 25 miles south of Capri, and put into operation the second alarm phase "ready for battle."

Fifth Army likewise was "ready for battle." Its long period of training and its careful planning for invasion were about to be tested. Field Order No. 1, dated 25 August 1943, put the outline plan for Avalanche into effect. By 5 September convoys were

loaded at many North African ports and the bulk of Fifth Army was aboard ship. On that date the ships cast off from Oran and Mers-el-Kebir, the most distant of the embarkation centers. By the evening of the 8th the hundreds of craft bearing the forces for Avalanche converged on the Gulf of Salerno. At 1830 the ship radios picked up the voice of General Eisenhower: "Hostilities between the United Nations and Italy have terminated, effective at once." Announcement of the armistice, signed on 3 September at Syracuse, had been delayed until the last minute with the aim of surprising the Germans before they could take over the coastal defenses. The troops immediately began to speculate as to the extent of opposition before them, but senior officers on board each ship made it clear that the original plans would be carried out; German air activity over the convoys emphasized the point. D-day was the morrow, and H-hour was not far away. Operation Avalanche was about to start. Fifth Army was swinging into action for its initial attack on Fortress Europe.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>As far back as the Anfa (Casablanca) conference of President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, and Allied military leaders in January 1943, Sardinia had been considered a possible objective of our first European operation instead of Sicily. Although the decision was to attack Sicily first, Sardinia remained under consideration as a later objective.

<sup>2</sup>Throughout the text British divisions and smaller units will be designated in cardinal numbers, and British corps given in arabic numerals, the more easily to distinguish them from American units.

<sup>3</sup>Standard Army time was B Time, two hours ahead of Greenwich Standard Time (Z). At 0200, 25 September 1943, the time was shifted to A Time, one hour ahead of Z Time.

<sup>4</sup>On D-day a naval feint was made in this area to delude the enemy.

<sup>5</sup>It may be noted that General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery, commanding Eighth Army, wanted to have Avalanche farther south than Salerno so as to secure support for the attack of Eighth Army up the Italian toe. This unnecessary caution was overruled.

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## CHAPTER II

# THE SALERNO BEACHHEAD

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### 1. D-DAY AT SALERNO

9 September 1943

ON the night of 8-9 September the Fifth Army convoy of 450 vessels stood some distance off the Salerno beaches. Minefields blocked a close approach to shore, and the reported presence of coastal batteries and railway artillery, located inland about a mile from the beach, constituted another threat to the larger vessels. It was therefore necessary for the troopships to drop anchor some 12 miles from the beaches, a definite disadvantage to the invading forces. The troops were required to remain aboard the landing craft for a longer period of time—and with even a small sea running, a landing craft pitches and rolls. Furthermore, the time needed to reach shore and to return was greatly extended, thus slowing up unloading operation. The mine sweepers immediately proceeded to their work of opening gaps for the entrance to the bay.

Fortunately the sea was smooth when initial waves debarked from the troopships. There was some confusion. Difference in signals used by the American and British navies resulted in occasional misunderstanding among the mixed coxwains, and the circuitous routes the craft had to follow through the minefields caused delay in reaching shore. Lanes had been swept through the fields, but occasional mines, having broken free, drifted into the cleared paths where they destroyed a few landing craft.

At 0330 everything was working as planned. All assault troops and the necessary vehicles were en route to the beach. Back at the transport area ship's crews were loading the follow-up tanks, antiaircraft artillery, and ammunition vehicles. Light artillery and antitank guns were already moving shoreward in DUKWs. On the American front there was an unnatural quiet as the landing craft approached the beach. The pre-dawn darkness and stillness were broken only by the naval gunfire preparation to the north where the British were firing; the American landing was to be made without any preparation.

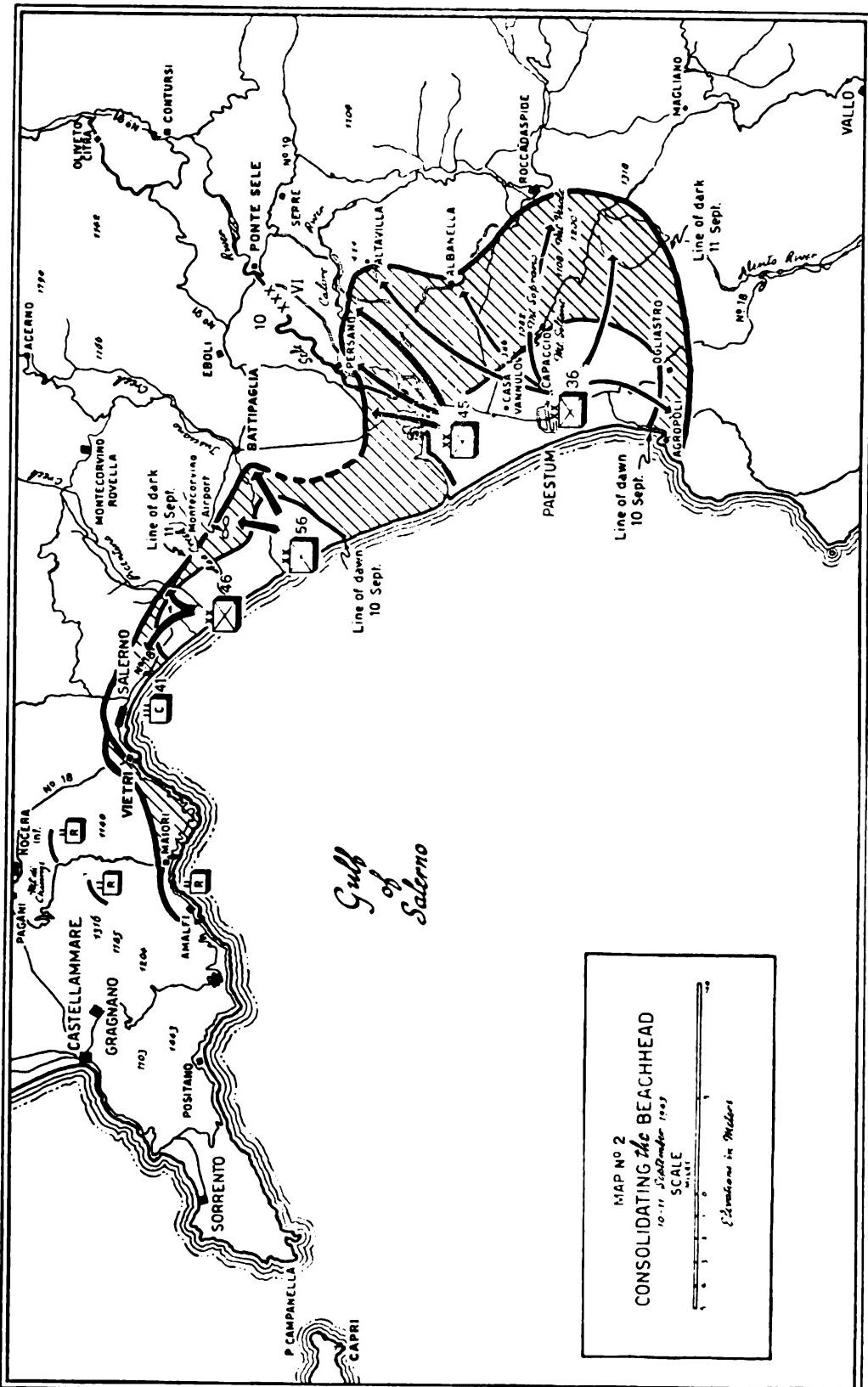
The tense quiet did not last long. The troops came in, and as though on signal the Germans opened fire with artillery, machine

guns, and mortars. Machine guns had been emplaced among the dunes, but much of their fire was too high to produce casualties. It was still dark, and the invading troops, impressed with the unhealthful state of the beach, cut paths through or crawled under the wire and dashed inland to find protection among the sand dunes. From there they could go about the task of destroying the machine-gun and mortar crews near the beach. The hostile fire of artillery, mortars, and machine guns from positions farther inland was heavy. A few of the landing craft were hit; others were forced to turn back. Confusion was added when some coxswains attempted to change direction and go around the hostile fire. Others started to return to their mother ships; some simply milled about.

The assaulting troops continued to fight their way inland while additional troops were constantly arriving. Although the plan called for seven organized waves before the landing craft began shuttling, only three waves came in as such, at eight-minute intervals from H-hour on. Just behind the first wave were provisional batteries of antiaircraft artillery formed from the caliber .50 machine-gun squads of the battalions participating. Their purpose was to provide for early beach defense and to meet any contingency which might prevent heavier equipment from getting ashore. Beach groups of the 531st Shore Engineer Regiment and the 4th Naval Beach Battalion went quickly to work under fire to organize the landing area for supply and communications. Light artillery and antitank guns, all on DUKWs, and antiaircraft guns on LCMs landed shortly after dawn; in two hours, 0530-0730, 123 DUKWs came ashore. The 133d and 151st Field Artillery Battalions were thus on the beaches early to support our advance.

By daylight the 142d Infantry was approaching its scheduled objectives but was still short of them; the 141st Infantry was halted by heavy fire close to the beaches. Although each battalion was acting as a unit, enemy resistance had caused much internal disorganization, resulting in the separation of troops in the darkness. Members of radio teams and crew-served weapons, such as mortars, machine guns, and bazookas, had become casualties or separated. Consequently many teams were inoperative. By nightfall, however, commanders were being rewarded for the many hours spent in describing the terrain, for large numbers of the missing reported in at the initial objectives of their units.<sup>1</sup>

The principal opposition encountered by VI Corps on D-day came from at least four groups of Mark IV tanks which attacked



the beaches. (See Map 2.) One group of tanks, about 15 in number, came in from the south, overrunning the assault troops of the 142d Infantry and passing on toward the north after creating some confusion. A second group of similar size appeared on the front of the 141st Infantry south of Paestum soon after daylight and kept that regiment pinned down near the beaches most of the day. During the afternoon the enemy armor was driven east by gunfire from the USS *Savannah*; naval gunfire directed by shore fire control parties furnished very valuable support throughout the day. A third attack by 15 tanks struck toward Paestum from the north at about 1020. This force split, and four of the tanks went east toward Capaccio while the others continued south. One-half mile from Paestum they were met by a 105mm howitzer of the 151st Field Artillery Battalion; a 75mm gun from the Cannon Company, 143d Infantry; a 37mm gun of the 36th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop; and an A-36 plane. Five tanks were destroyed in the area around Casa Vannulo, about a mile from the beach, and the others withdrew. A fourth attack involving about 13 tanks came from the north about noon and attempted to reach the beaches. Once more the tanks were driven back before they could get to the beach, again with a loss of 5. At about 1300, 10 tanks advancing down Highway 18 from the north were stopped by artillery fire from the 133d Field Artillery Battalion, which destroyed 3. During these attacks our infantry made good defensive and offensive use of their smaller weapons. One battalion, for example, knocked out 6 tanks with bazooka fire, 2 with rifle grenades, and 1 with a hand grenade dropped in an open turret.

Despite these tank attacks two regiments of the 36th Division under General Walker reached their D-day objectives. At nightfall the 142d Infantry under Col. John D. Forsythe occupied positions from the high ground just west of La Cosa Creek to the nose of Mt. Soprano (Hill 386), and the 143d Infantry under Col. William H. Martin, which came in after 0640, held positions from Hill 386 to Capaccio and Mt. Soltane.<sup>2</sup> Except for some mixed units, the 141st Infantry under Col. Richard J. Werner was unable to advance throughout the day.

10 Corps met essentially the same kind of opposition as that encountered by VI Corps on the Paestum beaches. British troops in the first waves hit the beaches at H-hour, and the enemy opened up with heavy fire, especially from the Lilienthal strongpoint just

south of the mouth of Asa Creek. Allied warships took up the challenge and blasted the areas behind the beaches. In the face of bitter resistance troops of the assault waves rushed ashore from landing craft and started inland. After daybreak 10 Corps encountered more determined resistance than that in front of VI Corps. A strong enemy tank force attacked the 167 Brigade on the right flank of the 56 Division, but naval fire was decisive in breaking up this assault. As the 46 and 56 Divisions pushed forward, the 64th Panzer Grenadier Regiment fell back slowly. By nightfall the leading British troops were inland an average distance of 3000 yards and were attacking the Montecorvino airfield, one of their major objectives. Patrols entered Battipaglia, but enemy infantry and tanks immediately moved into that town and forced a withdrawal. At the end of the day patrols of the 46 Division were approaching Salerno from the east.

On the left flank the Ranger Force landed unopposed at Maiori. The 1st and 3d Ranger Battalions moved north about five miles to the pass below Mt. di Chiunzi and reconnoitered routes to Pagani and Nocera Inferiore, while the 4th Ranger Battalion secured the beachhead. After eliminating minor opposition at Vietri the 2 Commando and the 41 Royal Marine Commando turned east toward Salerno. North and west of Pagani the Germans concentrated forces to meet the Ranger threat, and at nightfall they launched a futile attack against the Ranger position.

At the end of D-day all units had reached their initial objectives with the exception of most of the 141st Infantry, which remained pinned down near the beaches. Artillery, tanks, and other supporting units were delayed in landing by heavy fire from prepared enemy positions and from tanks employed as roving artillery. These tanks delivered the strongest opposition encountered by Fifth Army, but the remarkable success of the infantry in meeting enemy armor, together with excellent supporting naval gunfire, prevented the enemy from defeating our landing. Throughout the day our forces were handicapped by lack of observation. The hedgerows surrounding each field presented a screen, and only by taking advantage of houses as observation posts could a view be had in any direction. By nightfall the beaches were not fully organized, but they were functioning efficiently under the most difficult conditions.

## 2. CONSOLIDATING THE BEACHHEAD

10-11 September 1943

VI Corps met practically no opposition on D plus 1 while its troops were getting into position to carry on the attack, for the Germans had decided to concentrate their meager forces north of the Calore against 10 Corps. On the right flank the 141st Infantry completed its reorganization and moved out to block enemy access from the south. In the center of the 36th Division zone the 143d Infantry occupied positions from the nose of Mt. Soprano to Capaccio and Mt. Soltane, and sent patrols across the upper Calore River. Meanwhile the 142d Infantry and the 132d Field Artillery Battalion moved up to attack the Altavilla hill mass. At the close of the day battalions of the 142d Infantry held Albanella, controlled the ridge line to Rocca d'Aspide, and were ready to attack on the 11th. During the morning of 10 September the 179th Regimental Combat Team came ashore and prepared for action.

On 11 September the 142d Infantry continued its attacks and captured Altavilla and Hill 424 against light opposition. The 179th Infantry under Col. Robert B. Hutchins, supported by the 160th Field Artillery Battalion, was committed on its left late on the 10th to drive on Ponte Sele through the salient formed by the Sele and Calore rivers, which run west and then south before joining south of Persano. (*See Map 3.*) The attack met stiff resistance. The 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, thrust toward Ponte Sele from the south near Hill 424 but was unable to cross the Calore River into the salient, being stopped at noon by tanks and German engineers. On the night of the 11th it was forced back to La Cosa Creek. The rest of the combat team crossed the Calore near its junction with the Sele and pushed up the salient from the southwest; assault companies penetrated to the near vicinity of Ponte Sele and Highway 19. Struck by enemy tanks and artillery from their rear at Persano and by infantry and tanks to their front, the 1st and 3d Battalions, almost encircled and hard-pressed, fell back to a position northeast of Persano. Attempts by elements of the 753d Tank Battalion and the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion to break through to their aid were unsuccessful; by dusk the situation appeared dangerous.

Early on the afternoon of the 11th the 157th Infantry under Col. Charles M. Ankcorn was committed from Army reserve to assist the 179th Infantry by moving up the west side of the Sele and seizing the fords northwest of Persano; if successful, the 157th In-

fantry would thus trap the enemy at Persano. Ahead of the infantry the 191st Tank Battalion (Medium), which had landed late on D-day, probed into the open, rolling country as far as the Tobacco Factory, located on a dominating swell across the Sele from Persano. Strong enemy resistance centering about this natural fortress stopped the advance of the tanks and infantry west of the Sele well short of the important fords. During the day the 45th Division under Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton assumed command of the left flank of VI Corps, and the corps boundary was moved north of the Sele.

At dark on the 11th VI Corps had occupied, almost without opposition, the high ground from Hill 424 around to Agropoli and thus controlled all the routes of access to the beachhead from the south and southeast. North of the Calore, however, the story was far different. One regiment of the 45th Division was in a tight spot, and another had been stopped by stubborn enemy resistance; still farther to the north, in front of 10 Corps, the German opposition was even more formidable. The German command had quickly decided to concentrate all its available strength in the area about Salerno and Battipaglia so as to guard the important mountain passes leading toward Naples until reinforcements might make a general counterattack possible. On the 10 Corps front, mountainous terrain reaching almost to the shore added to the difficulties to be overcome. In the area between the sea and Highway 18 to Battipaglia the country is generally flat with gently rising slopes well covered with apple, orange, and olive orchards. Immediately beyond Eboli, Battipaglia, and Montecorvino the country rises to hills, mostly 500 to 700 meters high, which dominate the plain below.

On the extreme left, in the Pagani-Nocera area, the Rangers had made a serious penetration which worried the enemy, for our positions in this area both protected the left flank of 10 Corps and threatened enemy control of the westernmost passes. During the 10th German patrols probed the positions of the 3d Ranger Battalion on Mt. di Chiunzi. Sharp skirmishes occurred, but Colonel Darby's Rangers held their ground; the following morning they were reinforced by the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, with supporting units from VI Corps. To the east of the Rangers, Commandos and units of the 46 Division moved north of Vietri astride Highway 18. A strong force of German infantry supported by tanks failed in an effort to drive through the Commando

defenses but halted further advance on this axis. Southeast from Salerno, which was soon firmly in our hands, the 46 Division under General Hawkesworth reached a line through the mountains about two miles inland and controlled nearly eight miles of Highway 18 by early morning of the 10th. Opposed by elements of the 16th Panzer Division and reconnaissance troops of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division, the 46 Division could make no further gain through the rugged terrain.

Under General Templer the 56 Division to the right exerted its main effort along Tuscliano Creek and before dawn pushed patrols into Battipaglia, the most important road center in the entire Army zone. Enemy reinforcements came up, and fighting continued throughout the day of the 10th; at nightfall a counterattack by German tanks and infantry drove the 9 Royal Fusiliers (167 Brigade) out of the town. On the 11th the contest for Battipaglia continued with indecisive results. Two miles west of Battipaglia on Highway 18 a tobacco factory furnished another strongpoint for the stubborn enemy defense; here the 201 Guards Brigade was unable to advance. The outcome of the struggle for the Montecorvino Airfield was still in doubt at nightfall on the 10th, but on the following day 10 Corps troops captured this major objective. Acquisition, however, did not make the field available for our planes since it was under artillery fire from nearby hills. Our engineers, working night and day, completed a landing strip on the 13th west of Highway 18 and north of Paestum.

The night of 10-11 September and the following day saw the greatest enemy air activity so far. During this period no less than 120 hostile aircraft were reported over the beaches. Barrage balloons, antiaircraft artillery, and our fighter planes prevented these attacks from being very effective; the most serious damage was caused to the USS *Savannah*, probably by a radio-controlled rocket bomb. The lack of mass air attack at Salerno proved groundless the belief that the Luftwaffe had been withholding a large air reserve to use in repelling an invasion of Italy. On D-day only five raids by formations of eight fighter-bombers were made against our troops on the beach; several attacks of small formations were sent against our ships offshore. During the week following the landing the limited amount of enemy air action was almost entirely devoted to raids on the beach and on our shipping. The Germans flew from 75 to 120 sorties daily, but by D plus 5 our planes had established effective cover over the occupied area. Enemy fighter action op-

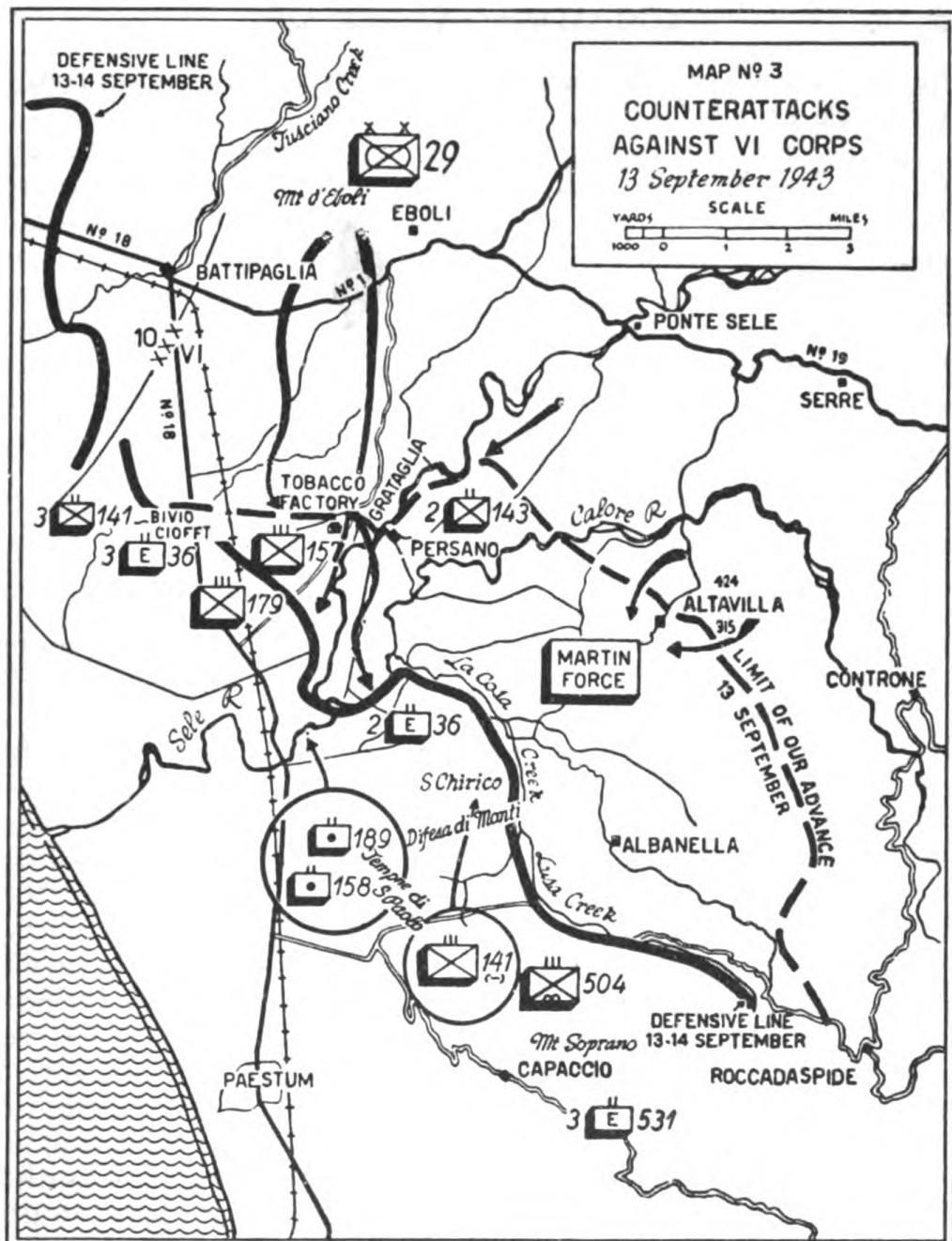
posing our 40 strategic missions during this period was almost negligible. During 9-17 September the Tactical Air Force was used to a great extent on the roads and railroads leading into the Salerno area, with particular attention to the crossings over the Volturno River, Eboli, and Battipaglia. In order to provide for the most effective use of the Tactical Air Force in cooperation with the Fifth Army ground plan, XII Air Support Command set up its headquarters adjacent to the Army headquarters and maintained close liaison. An organization was perfected whereby air missions could be accomplished within an hour and a half from time of call.

### 3. THE GERMAN COUNTERATTACKS

12-14 September 1943

By 12 September it became apparent that the enemy was rushing reinforcements into the Salerno area to support the 16th Panzer Division and that his build-up had proceeded more rapidly than ours; for our air force had too many other tasks and was operating from too distant bases to be able to check the enemy movements. Confronted by invasion of two Allied armies as well as the necessity of consolidating rear lines of communications menaced by the Italian armistice, the enemy had decided to concentrate his efforts against Fifth Army with the minimum aim of holding us below Naples until his troops could evacuate southern Italy. On 9 September long columns of German motor vehicles headed north from the lower end of the Italian boot as elements of the 26th Panzer and 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions raced north to escape being trapped between Fifth and Eighth Armies. Both these divisions entered the battle of Salerno.<sup>8</sup> As early as the 11th elements of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division, coming south from beyond Naples, were identified in front of 10 Corps, and on the next day units of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division were spotted. At least one battalion of the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division was in the line on 14 September. This enemy build-up in the Salerno battle resulted in a large mixture of units from six mobile, picked divisions, for the 16th Panzer Division was apparently the only complete division which entered the battle. Under the supreme command of XIV Panzer Corps, units from the various divisions were combined into battle groups somewhat resembling our combat teams.

To support the counterattacks the Germans diverted some of their fighter forces from the beaches to strafing attacks on our



front lines. Ground tactics consisted of armored thrusts, followed by infantry in half tracks. If the attack did not gain its end, the enemy would withdraw, ready to strike again elsewhere in a few hours; if the positions reached were important, the enemy infantry immediately occupied them with machine guns and mortars and prepared an all-around defense. In general plan the enemy threw his principal strength on the left of Fifth Army, where 10 Corps seriously threatened the mountain passes and highways to Naples,

but by 13 September he had sufficient forces to launch nasty counterattacks against VI Corps as well.

An initial thrust against VI Corps took place on 12 September. On this date the enemy had begun a counterattack against the 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, even before the battalion commander could organize his position on Hill 424, which had been taken shortly after noon on the 11th. Hill 424, with the town of Altavilla perched on its lower slopes, formed an important part of the Fifth Army beachhead, since its possession would deny to the enemy a commanding view of the landing operations and the movements of troops below. The hill was, however, of even greater importance to the Germans. Not only did it provide them with observation, but it covered access to the routes of withdrawal which must be used by forces to the south in the event of a retrograde movement. These forces were in double danger from Fifth Army on the north and from the British Eighth Army, moving up from the south. Even more, Hill 424 covered a major escape route through Contursi for the German forces about Battipaglia.

Each side, therefore, sought to control this key terrain feature; but the deeply cut, extensive hill mass was not easy to defend. In particular, Hill 424 would be difficult to hold unless an unnumbered hill to the south, separated from Hill 424 by a deep ravine with heavily wooded sides were also occupied. The 2d Battalion, 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, began to infiltrate around the hill before daylight on 12 September, and active enemy artillery pounded our communications and Hill 424 severely. The main enemy attack during the day was directed against the area defended by Company C on the south slope of Hill 424, opposite the unnumbered hill. Although our infantry fought magnificently, the hill was untenable and had to be abandoned. Under cover of darkness the various companies, isolated from one another, fought their way through the German lines and dug in on a knoll southwest of Hill 424. The enemy had regained this important terrain feature.

While the fight was in progress for the possession of Hill 424, our positions improved considerably on the left flank of VI Corps. The 179th Infantry captured Persano and reopened its lines of communication to the rear; west of the Sele the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry, drove the enemy from the Tobacco Factory in the morning of the 12th, lost it after noon to an enemy tank-infantry attack from Eboli, then regained it, and advanced to the Grataglia

Plain just west of Persano. This plain controlled the crossings over the Sele into the Sele-Calore salient at Persano. The 3d Battalion likewise advanced on the left, and the 3d Battalion, 36th Engineer Combat Regiment, took over the guard of Bivio Cioffi on Highway 18.

Nevertheless the left flank of VI Corps was weak, for beyond Highway 18 there was still a considerable gap between the two corps, originally scheduled to meet at Ponte Sele and now engaged each in its own battle well short of that point. On the 12th the gap, which extended to as much as five miles, was screened only by the 23 Armoured Brigade (reconnaissance). In view of the British troubles at Battipaglia General Dawley grew concerned over his left and ordered extensive shifts in the dispositions of VI Corps to take place during the night of 12-13 September. The 179th Infantry left the Sele-Calore salient and took up positions on the left of the 157th Infantry before daybreak on the 13th, thereby greatly strengthening the exposed flank of VI Corps. Later on the 13th two battalions of the 141st Infantry came north from the quiet Ogliastro sector to the left flank by truck. One of these battalions was moved again to reinforce the La Cosa Creek line during the night of 13-14 September. In order to fill the gap in the Sele-Calore salient caused by withdrawing all the 179th Infantry, the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, was ordered on the 12th to take up positions east of Persano. This battalion, which had come from Tempone di San Paolo to Mt. San Chirico earlier in the day, accordingly moved again to the banks of the Calore River during the afternoon and prepared to cross into the salient under cover of darkness. By early morning of the 13th the battalion had reached its somewhat isolated positions.

While these movements were taking place on the left flank of VI Corps, Colonel Martin of the 143d Infantry assembled a force consisting of the 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 142d Infantry, with the 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, in reserve, to attack Altavilla again at 0600, 13 September. Although there was no time for a daylight reconnaissance of the terrain, the attack jumped off as scheduled. The 3d Battalion, 142d Infantry, occupied the unnumbered hill with a portion of its force but was compelled to withdraw after dark. The 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, moved onto the high ground north of Altavilla. There enemy counterattacks surrounded the battalion, and part of one company had to be left in Altavilla when the battalion withdrew about

midnight. Late on the 13th all units in front of Altavilla received urgent corps orders to organize a defensive line along La Cosa Creek.

On the left flank of VI Corps the Germans attacked even more forcefully on 13 September in an apparent effort to break through to our Paestum beaches. Late in the morning the 157th Infantry attempted to advance to form a junction with the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, in the Sele-Calore salient but could make no progress. In the afternoon the Germans launched a tank-infantry attack that drove the 157th Infantry back beyond the Sele River crossing at Persano and off the Factory swell. The enemy then crossed into the salient, hit the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, from front and rear, and practically wiped it out. After this success the German infantry and tanks drove on down the salient to attack our rear areas. This attempted breakthrough near the junction of the Sele and Calore rivers was stopped by the 189th and 158th Field Artillery Battalions (45th Division), which gathered every available man to form a hasty defense line and also poured heavy fire—3650 rounds—on the enemy armor.

The situation was now critical, and during the ensuing night VI Corps made readjustments along its entire front. Our men had fought bravely but were simply too extended; the necessary solution was to pull back into good defensive lines and ride out the storm until substantial reserves could be assembled. The 45th Division dropped back on its right and organized a defensive line from Bivio Cioffi to the Sele-Calore junction. The 36th Division, on the lower hills west of La Cosa Creek, was reinforced with any troops available, including the 1st and 2d Battalions, 504th Parachute Infantry, which had dropped behind our lines in the night. During the 14th the enemy made several efforts to break through the VI Corps line, but each attack was thrown back with heavy losses to the enemy. On this date the naval command at Salerno became extremely worried about our position and made plans for evacuation if necessary, though indeed the worst of the attack was over.

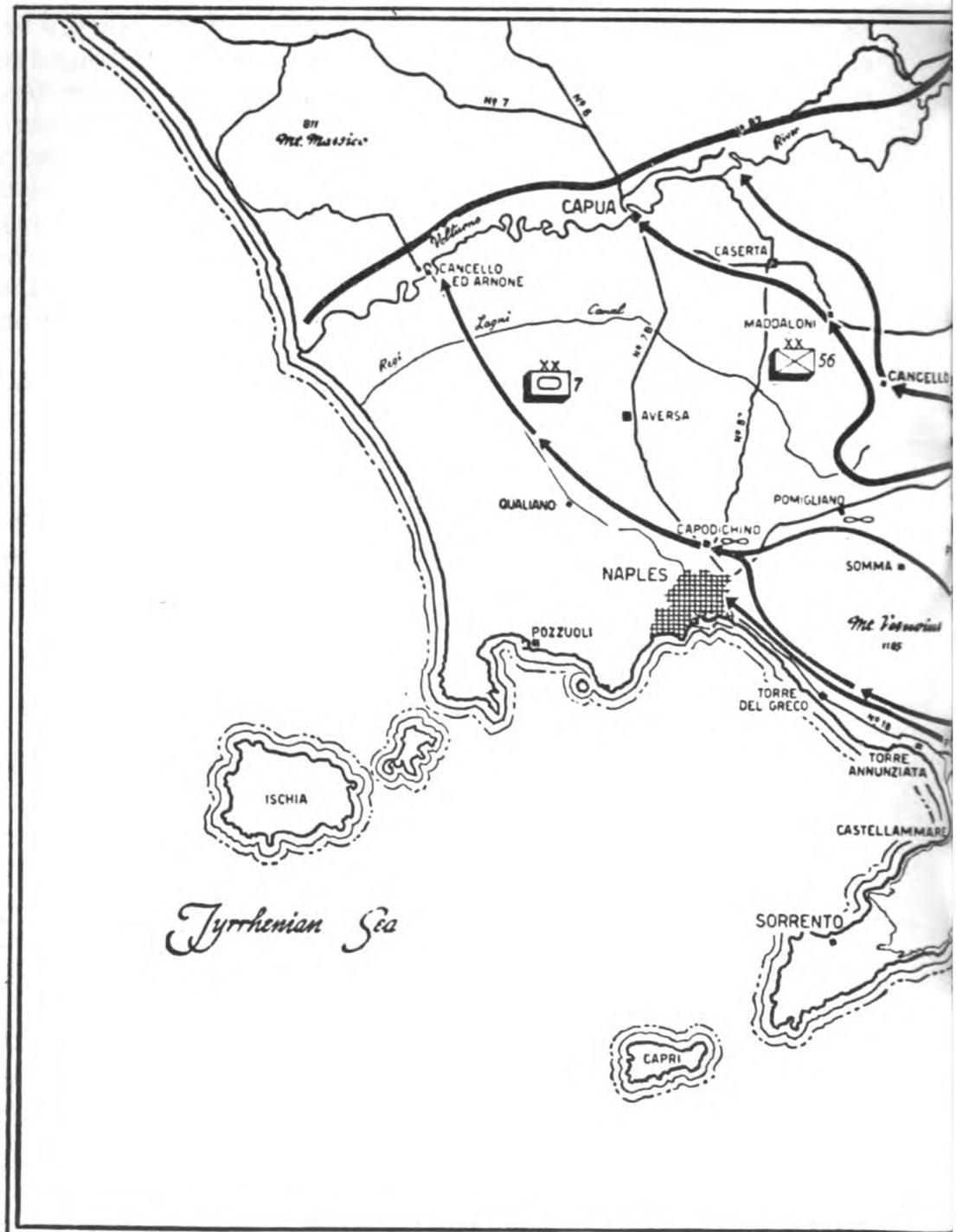
Despite some loss of ground 10 Corps likewise had held its own during the critical days of 12-14 September. On the 12th the enemy had launched another unsuccessful assault against the Rangers on the left flank. An attack of 40 tanks with infantry from the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division drove the 167 Brigade once again out of Battipaglia. Although the Germans were held at the out-

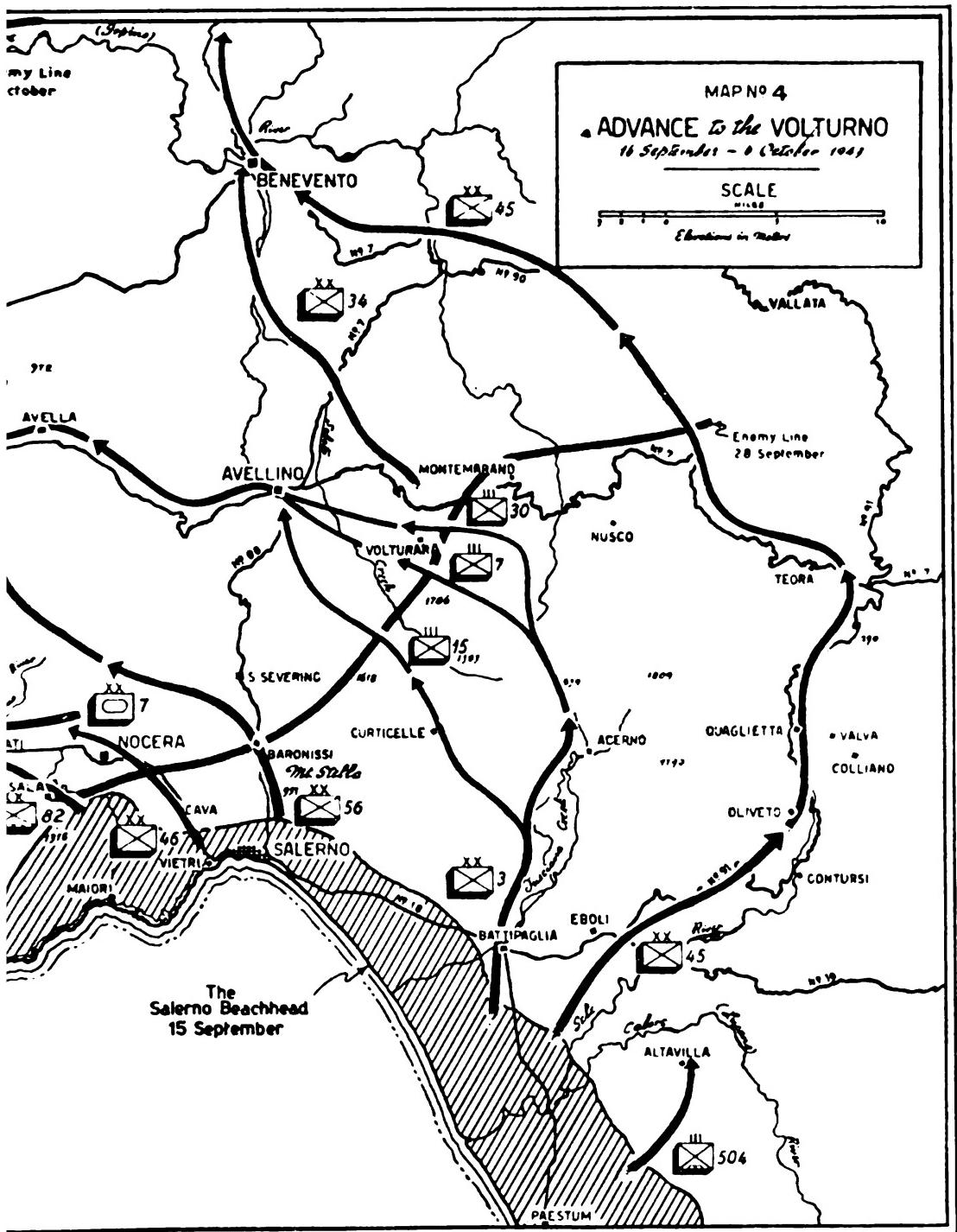
skirts of the town, the 167 Brigade lost heavily and was relieved by the 201 Guards Brigade at the first opportunity; the following day it again came into the line, on the right of the 56 Division sector, and established contact with VI Corps. Slight adjustments were made along the front, but the division spent most of the 13th in reorganizing and preparing for further German attacks, which came in strength during the next night. All efforts of the enemy tanks and infantry to expand their Battipaglia holdings were repulsed. The worst of the storm was now over, and on the 14th the 128 Brigade on the right of the 46 Division and the 169 Brigade on the left of the 56 Division even pushed ahead slightly. By this time all efforts of the air and naval forces were mobilized and were being directed at the Eboli-Battipaglia area. Enemy units on the road between Battipaglia and Eboli were brought under accurate naval fire, helpful as always during the Salerno battle; by the 15th the British battleships *Warspite* and *Valiant* were on hand to increase the weight of the naval bombardment.<sup>1</sup> The Tactical and Strategic Air Forces both heavily bombed German positions in the Battipaglia area on the 14th. The British 7 Armoured Division under Maj. Gen. G. W. E. Erskine was unloading on 14 September, bringing needed strength to cope with enemy armor.

#### 4. THE ENEMY WITHDRAWS

15-19 September 1943

The decisive period in the battle for the Salerno beachhead occurred on 13-14 September. Having held the full weight of the enemy forces on those days, Fifth Army was enabled to complete a necessary reorganization and to build up its strength to continue the attack. By the morning of the 15th, on the other hand, the enemy began to revert to the defensive all along the Fifth Army front. The reasons for his shift are clear. The British Eighth Army was continuing its advance against scant opposition, though more slowly than expected, and had reached Sapri about 40 miles to the south; the most desperate attacks of the Germans had not driven Fifth Army into the sea; and the build-up of supplies and reinforcements on the beaches was steadily increasing the Fifth Army strength. The 505th Parachute Infantry was dropped behind our lines south of Paestum on the night of 14-15 September, and the 325th Glider Regimental Combat Team came in by LCIs on the 15th. The 180th Regimental Combat Team (45th Division)





under Col. Forrest E. Cookson, which had landed early on the 14th, went into Army reserve. American forces were further augmented on the 18th with the arrival of the 3d Infantry Division, hastily brought up from Sicily.

The situation in front of 10 Corps during the German counter-attacks had been so grave that General Clark ordered the drop of a parachute battalion in the Avellino area to block the road net at that important point and to disrupt communications in the rear areas of the German forces opposing 10 Corps. This drop was originally scheduled for the night of 12-13 September, but preparations could not be finished by that date; and the 2d Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry, under Lt. Col. Doyle R. Yardley, did not finally drop until the night of 14-15 September. The paratroopers were widely scattered and took to the hills, where they coalesced into little groups and made raids against supply convoys and down into the plains during the next week. This small effort, it may be noted, was to be the only instance in the entire Fifth Army campaign of the actual employment of paratroopers in an air drop behind the enemy lines.

From the 15th on, the enemy dug in along most of the Fifth Army front and was content with minor jabs, easily repelled. German artillery was fairly active and also difficult to neutralize, for the enemy shifted his gun positions often to avoid our counter-battery fire. By the 17th the enemy in front of VI Corps was withdrawing up Highway 91 through Contursi, thinning out his positions from his left flank. Two battalions of the 504th Parachute Infantry, under Col. Reuben H. Tucker, accordingly attacked the hill mass by Altavilla during the night and morning of the 17th, but they were pinned by enemy artillery fire until late afternoon of the 18th, when our troops took Altavilla for the third time. By then the enemy had withdrawn his covering screen in front of VI Corps, and patrols reported no contact. The 131 Infantry Brigade (7 Armoured Division) occupied Battipaglia without resistance late in the afternoon of 18 September.

During the 19th the 56 Division extended its beachhead slightly while the 46 Division held its positions. All units of VI Corps made substantial advances. The 45th Division moved up through Persano and the Tobacco Factory to the heights on both sides of Eboli, and units of the 36th Division occupied Serre and Ponte Sele. Fifth Army now held the Salerno plain, and the beachhead was completely secure. On 20 September Maj. Gen. John P. Lucas

assumed command of VI Corps. The 36th Division was withdrawn to Army reserve to guard the Salerno beaches; the 3d Division took its place in VI Corps. Headquarters, 82d Airborne Division, under Maj. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway arrived at Salerno, and the units of the division which had previously been attached to VI Corps were ordered to concentrate in Army reserve on the right flank of Fifth Army at Controne. Meanwhile on 15-16 September reconnaissance elements of Eighth and Fifth Armies met at points 15 to 20 miles southeast of Agropoli (Laureana, Vallo, and Mercato). Eighth Army continued to move toward the right flank of Fifth Army in order to drive on up the east and center of the Italian Peninsula.

## 5. THE DRIVE ON NAPLES

20 September-6 October 1943

With the Salerno plain in its possession Fifth Army could now proceed to its mission, the capture of Naples harbor and the nearby airfields. Available information suggested that the Germans intended to fight a delaying action up to the Volturno River, where enemy fortifications were reported in progress. As it turned out, Marshal Kesselring had evidently ordered XIV Panzer Corps in front of Fifth Army to fall back toward the northwest in a vast pivot movement based on the Sorrento Peninsula. The forces on this flank were to hold the mountain passes as long as possible to permit a thorough wrecking of the port of Naples and to safeguard the enemy evacuation of the Campanian Plain. Then they too would fall back on the Volturno and link up with LXXVI Panzer Corps in front of Eighth Army to form a solid line across the Italian boot. The enemy retreat in accordance with these orders did not at any time become a rout. In front of 10 Corps the German forces consisted of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division with detachments from the 3d and 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions; these troops held tenaciously in positions which they had had two weeks to prepare. German routes of withdrawal before VI Corps were through mountain passes and across deep gorges where the use of mines and small delaying forces from the 16th Panzer Division, coupled with the destruction of roads and bridges, allowed the enemy to retreat in comparatively good order.

Our general plan required both corps of Fifth Army to attack abreast, with 10 Corps on the left delivering the principal thrust to secure the Vietri-Nocera-Pagani and Salerno-San Severino passes,

push on to the northwest to secure the flat Naples plain, and capture the port of Naples. (*See Map 4.*) VI Corps was directed to continue its advance, secure the line Avellino-Teora, and then be prepared to take Benevento.

General McCreery required two days to shift his 10 Corps troops from the south to the north of Salerno for the impending attack. Meanwhile the 3d and 45th Divisions of VI Corps began their flanking push into the mountains. The 3d Division, under Maj. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., moved up the road from Battipaglia through Acerno toward Highway 7, with the 15th Infantry on the left crossing the mountains north of Curticelle to get into position for a drive on Avellino. The 45th Division advanced up Highway 91 through Contursi to secure the junction of Highways 7 and 91. Both divisions ran into opposition on the 21st which held up their advance guards for a day. The 30th Infantry (3d Division) was stopped just south of Acerno by a blown bridge commanded by enemy rifle and machine-gun positions on the opposite side of the Tusciano Gorge, but by cross-country marches over the mountains the regiment drove out the enemy opposition and occupied Acerno on 22 September. The 180th Infantry (45th Division) met enemy positions to the west of Oliveto, which it outflanked and captured on the 22d.

The Fifth Army attack as a whole jumped off on 23 September. The 3d and 45th Divisions pushed forward on the right flank of Fifth Army despite the rugged terrain, which tended to canalize movement to a limited road net. The Germans left a few delaying detachments in front of the 45th Division, but relied chiefly on extensive demolitions. Division engineers worked night and day to bulldoze by-passes where these were possible, or to build temporary bridges; and the 36th Combat Engineers of VI Corps followed up closely behind. The fall rains, which began on the night of 26-27 September, washed down dirt and rocks on the roads, damaged several key bridges, and thereby slowed the advance of VI Corps.<sup>5</sup> By the morning of the 26th the 45th Division securely held Teora and the junction of Highways 7 and 91. The 3d Division reached Highway 7 by the 27th, at which time its three infantry regiments were disposed in a wide arc about Avellino. Supply of some units in the 3d Division devolved on pack trains or even upon human pack trains from the reserve companies of the infantry regiments.

For the drive on Avellino VI Corps was reinforced by the 133d Regimental Combat Team (34th Division) under Maj. Gen.

Charles W. Ryder, which had begun landing on 21 September at the beaches rather than at Naples as planned. The three infantry regiments of the 3d Division closed in quickly on Avellino from the south and east while the 133d Infantry drove west above Highway 7 to cut the main road from Avellino to Benevento;<sup>6</sup> the 45th Division meanwhile guarded the right flank and kept contact with Eighth Army. After a night attack 29-30 September Avellino fell to the 3d Division on the morning of the 30th. VI Corps now, shifted the mass of its forces to the left along the general line Avellino-Montemarano-Teora, leaving screening forces to cover its supply route east of Montemarano, and prepared plans to assist 10 Corps in the capture of Naples or to drive on Benevento as the situation dictated.

While VI Corps was moving ahead almost without opposition apart from that afforded by the terrain and demolitions, 10 Corps made the main Army effort on the left, the 46 Division aiming at the Nocera-Pagani pass and the 56 Division assisting by a push north from Salerno. When 10 Corps attacked at dawn on 23 September, the Germans held firmly; for the next four days they resisted stubbornly on the general line Cava-Mt. Stella, yielding only on and after the 26th as their general position began to deteriorate. By the 28th VI Corps on the right flank of Fifth Army had swung around to a position from which it could close in and threaten the German defenses along the Sorrento Peninsula from the east. The left flank of the Army was reinforced by the transfer of the 82d Airborne Division to Maiori by LCIs, and command in this area, including the Ranger Force, passed to General Ridgway under 10 Corps control on the 26th. The Rangers had held their positions, gained in the first rush of the original landings, against all attacks and now began to push forward so as to bring pressure on the German right flank.

Thus threatened from east and west, the German forces all along the front of 10 Corps started a withdrawal, and the tempo of our advance speeded up. On the 28th the Ranger Force occupied Sala on the northwest side of the Sorrento Mountain chain, overlooking the plain of Nocera. The 23 Armoured Brigade debouched into the level country north of Sala and advanced to Castellammare while the 131 Brigade took Nocera. This brigade passed through the 46 Division and formed the advance guard for the 7 Armoured Division, which was to lead the push to Naples. On the 29th the bridge at Scafati was seized intact, although it had been prepared for de-

molition. By this action we secured the only bridge over the Sarno not destroyed by the Germans. Even so the many vehicles of the armored division were impeded by a bottleneck until three more bridges were thrown across the Sarno; then the British armor was ready for the dramatic plunge on Naples.

Pushing closely upon the heels of the retreating enemy, British armored reconnaissance units swept along leading the attack. Pompeii, Torre Annunziata, and many other cities fell without opposition. On the left patrols of the 82d Airborne Division reached Torre del Greco, where the Germans held for a short time. At nightfall on 30 September troops of 10 Corps were surrounding Mt. Vesuvius. Naples was within our grasp, and at 0930, 1 October, armored patrols of the King's Dragoon Guards entered the city.

Naples had paid a very heavy price. Allied air raids had destroyed most of the harbor installations, and the damage was augmented by German destruction. In an attempt to deny dock and harbor facilities to Fifth Army the enemy scuttled ships at the piers and sank others in the harbor; the pipelines had been ripped up and the unloading machinery systematically destroyed. Between Allied bombings and German demolitions the docks and storehouses along the waterfront of Naples were left a mass of ruins, crumbled stones, and fire-twisted steel. In addition the Germans had done their utmost to wreck all public utilities, including electricity, transportation, and water. A normal port capacity of 8000 tons daily had been cut to 10 percent, but by the clearing away of debris and the use of expedients such as DUKWs to unload the Liberty ships, 3500 tons daily were coming in at the port only twelve days after its capture. On 14 October unloading of American supplies was stopped at the Salerno beaches and was transferred to Naples; at this time 10 Corps was unloading at Naples, Torre Annunziata, Castellammare, and Salerno.

The capture of Naples gave us a much-needed port, but mere possession of the city itself did not constitute a fulfillment of the Fifth Army objective. The airfields at Capodichino and Pomigliano were not yet in Allied hands, and the enemy must be driven well away from Naples harbor. Troops of Fifth Army, accordingly, did not pause with the capture of the city. Though the usual delaying tactics of the Germans were in evidence along the entire front, Fifth Army drove to the Volturno River in the next five days. Advance elements of 10 Corps reached the river on 5

October at Cancelllo-ed-Arnone, and on the following day the 56 Division occupied the town of Capua. On the right VI Corps had slower going in the mountains, but by 6 October the 3d Division had pushed through Cancelllo and Maddaloni into the mountains above Caserta. The 34th and 45th Divisions moved on the important road center of Benevento, which the 45th Reconnaissance Troop entered at 1210, 2 October. The 3d Battalion, 133d Infantry, occupied the city at 2330 on the same day and secured a bridgehead over the Calore River through which the 45th Division passed on the 4th. While the 45th Division continued to drive toward the high ground northeast of the junction of the Calore and Volturno rivers, the 34th Division went into assembly areas to prepare for the crossing of the Volturno.

By 6 October both corps of Fifth Army were on the general line of the Volturno River, and paused briefly to regroup their forces before crossing the river.<sup>7</sup> On our right the British Eighth Army had finally caught up and extended the Allied line across the Peninsula to Termoli on the Adriatic. The Foggia airfields, the main objective of Eighth Army, had been occupied by 1 October.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup>American casualties for D-day were 136 killed, 364 wounded and 104 missing—a total of 604.

<sup>2</sup>All elevations are given in meters throughout this volume. The elevation of a hill may differ on maps of different scale; the authority of the 1:50,000 series has generally governed.

<sup>3</sup>One battle group of the 26th Panzer Division, together with the 1st Parachute Division, continued to oppose Eighth Army.

<sup>4</sup>HMS *Warspite* was hit by a German rocket-bomb on 16 September and was towed back to Malta.

<sup>5</sup>Another mark of the changing season was the severe storm which struck the Salerno beaches on 28 September and prevented unloading for two and one-half days.

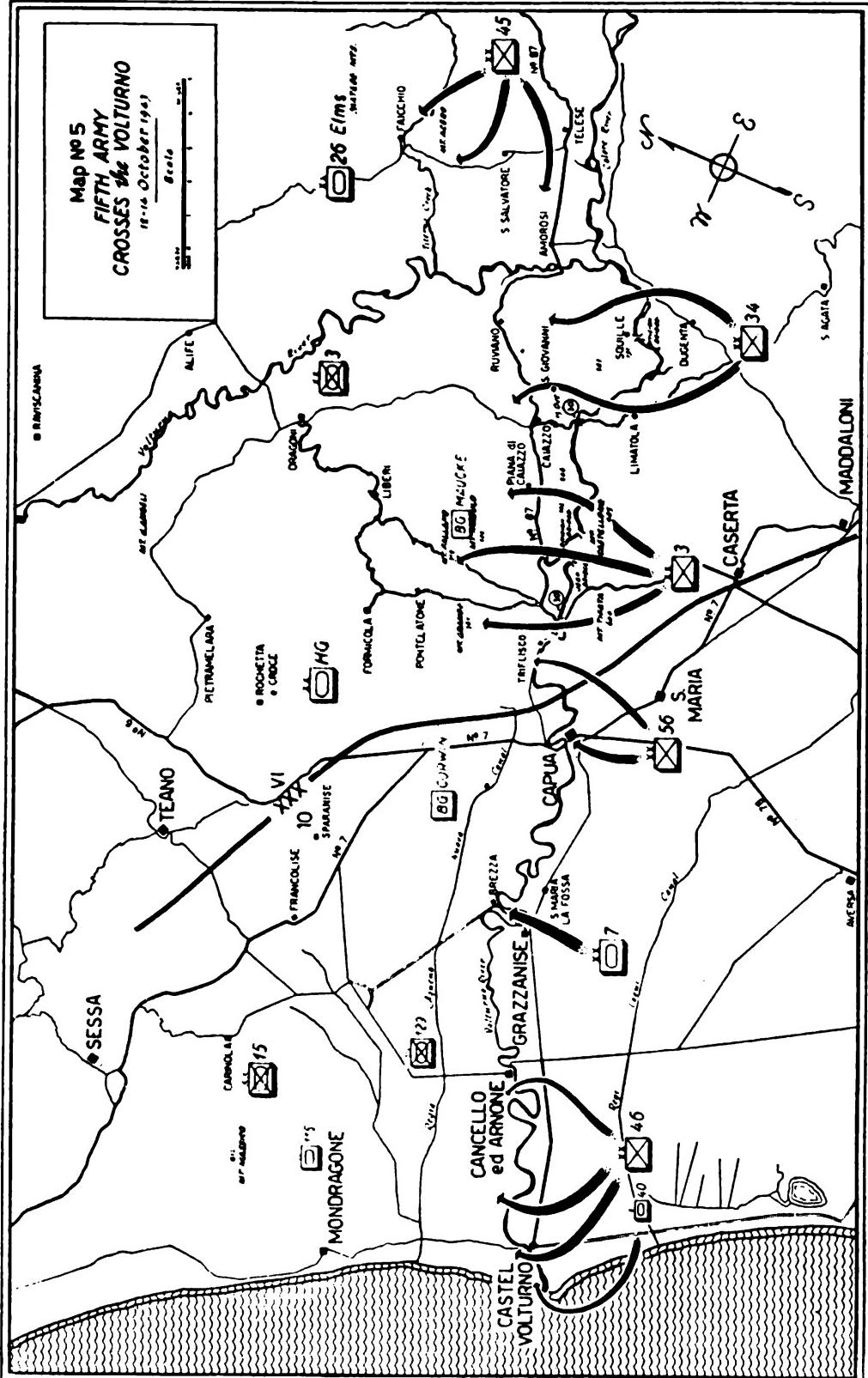
<sup>6</sup>The 100th Infantry Battalion took the place of the 2d Battalion, 133d Infantry, on guard duty at AFHQ, Algiers.

<sup>7</sup>Casualties thus far had been:

	Killed	Wounded	Missing	Total
American	788	2,841	1,318	4,947
British	982	4,060	2,230	7,272
Total	1,770	6,901	3,548	12,219

**Map No 5**  
**FIFTH ARMY**  
**CROSSES the VOLturno**

16-18 October 1943



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## CHAPTER III

# THROUGH THE WINTER LINE

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### 1. CROSSING THE VOLTURNO

7-14 October 1943

THE arrival of Fifth Army at the Volturno River, which marked the completion of its initial mission, brought only one week of rest to the troops. Winter was approaching, and General Alexander of 15th Army Group had already issued his orders on 29 September for a continuation of the attack by both Fifth and Eighth Armies, first to secure a line from Termoli to Isernia, Venafro, Sessa Aurunca, and the Tyrrhenian Sea and then to push well north of Rome. The next task of Fifth Army was accordingly the difficult military operation of crossing a defended river line, all bridges over which had been knocked out by our air force in September or demolished by the enemy.

The Volturno River rises high in the central mountain divide northwest of Isernia and flows generally south, then southeast, to its junction with the Calore River below Amorosi. Here it turns southwest and runs some 12 miles through a narrow valley bounded by steep and barren hills as far as the Triflisco Gap, where the hills fall away into the Campanian Plain. (See Map 5.) For its last 15 miles the Volturno meanders in large loops across the plain by the towns of Capua, Grazzanise, and Cencello-ed-Arnone to its mouth at Castel Volturno. 10 Corps held the south bank of the river in the plain, with the 46 Division on the left from the sea to Cencello-ed-Arnone, the 7 Armoured Division in the center, and the 56 Division on the right about Capua. For the crossing General Lucas of VI Corps put three divisions in line along the Volturno to Amorosi and across the Calore, the 3d Division on the left, the 34th Division in the center as far as the Calore junction, and the 45th Division on the right to the central backbone of the Matese Mountains. The 36th Division was in Army reserve, and the 82d Airborne Division was policing the city of Naples.

When Fifth Army reached the Volturno and Calore rivers early in October, the forces opposing us were recognized to be the German Tenth Army under Marshal Kesselring. Army Group B under Marshal Rommel had also the German Fourteenth Army in control of north Italy, with its southern boundary some distance

north of Rome;<sup>1</sup> taking both armies together, there was a possibility that the German forces in Italy might reach a total of 21 divisions, a force greater than our own on the ground though weaker in the air. More particularly, Tenth Army was composed of LXXVI Panzer Corps with four divisions opposite Eighth Army and XIV Panzer Corps with three divisions opposite Fifth Army. In line north of the Volturno were the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division from the sea to Grazzanise, the Hermann Goering Panzer Division to Piana di Caiazzo, the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division to the Calore junction, and the 26th Panzer Division of LXXVI Panzer Corps to the mountains. This latter unit was gradually withdrawing in front of the 45th Division and moving to the Eighth Army front; in its place the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division had just come down from Rome. The general plan of the enemy appeared to be to delay us on the Volturno as long as possible and then to continue the retreat northwards.

Initially General Clark planned to send 10 Corps across the river in its zone along the coast as soon as it cleared the south bank of the enemy. When 10 Corps was delayed by rains, demolitions, and determined rearguard resistance and the 34th Division was likewise impeded in moving up by rain and mud, the decision was finally made to send both VI and 10 Corps across in a coordinated assault on the night of 12-13 October. Plans were made for the drop of one parachute battalion in the Sessa area and for the landing of one regimental combat team from the 36th Division north of Mondragone, but enemy concentrations in the areas in question made both plans too risky. The 45th Division, which had crossed the Calore at Benevento on 4 October, would not have to cross the Volturno and continued its push northwest along the Apennines in contact with Eighth Army. By driving down the Calore to the middle Volturno Valley it could bring pressure to bear on the right flank of the German forces holding the Volturno line.

The final plans for the attack of VI Corps on the right called for two divisions to force a crossing of the Volturno at 0200, 13 October. The 3d Division (reinforced) was to cross between Triflisco and a point south of Caiazzo, secure a bridgehead, and assist the advance of 10 Corps. The 34th Division (reinforced), which had come into the line on the right of the 3d Division on and after 8 October, was to force crossings in its zone, secure a bridgehead, and prepare to attack on corps order toward Teano; in the latter mission it might be supported by the 45th Division.

The river valley in the area of the VI Corps attack is 1 to 4 miles wide; the river varies in width from 150 to 200 feet, its depth ranges from 3 to 5 feet, and its banks rise from 5 to 15 feet above the water level. The intensively cultivated valley is cut by small, tree-lined streams and sunken roads, and is covered with grain fields, vineyards, and orchards. The brush and the olive groves on the slopes of the hills on either side provide some concealment, but the valley itself offers little protection. The road net available for the use of VI Corps was wholly inadequate for the speedy movement of large bodies of troops or supplies; all bridges and culverts had been blown by the retreating Germans, and temporary by-passes constructed by the engineers were in many instances becoming impassable.

The main effort of VI Corps was to be made by the 3d Division against the section of the river defended by the Mauke Battle Group of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division. General Truscott was well aware that the enemy would be prepared for an attack at the Triflisco Gap. He therefore planned to make a fake attack on the left flank, while he sent the 7th Infantry, commanded by Col. Harry B. Sherman, across the valley to make the main assault in the center. The demonstration against the Triflisco Gap started promptly at midnight on 12-13 October, a clear night with a full moon. An hour later the division artillery opened up with a terrific concentration on enemy machine-gun and mortar positions across the river. This bombardment continued until 0155, when smoke shells were mixed with high-explosive to screen the crossing areas. The three battalions of the 7th Infantry, which had come down the valley between Mt. Tifata and Mt. Castellone, slogged quietly across the muddy fields and started crossing at 0200. Some elements crossed in assault boats and on rafts, some used life preservers, and others forded the swift river with the use of guide ropes; the last troops were not across until after dawn, when enemy artillery fire became more serious.

The 1st Battalion crossed below the hairpin loop southwest of Piana di Caiazzo, while the other two battalions crossed above it. They then pushed on across the plowed fields, hampered by machine-gun and rifle fire from positions in the valley and by occasional mined areas, toward Mt. Majulo (502 meters). An enemy tank counterattack proved abortive. Waterproofed vehicles of the 751st Tank Battalion and 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion, scheduled to cross at daybreak, finally forded the river

during the middle of the day and added their weight to the attack. The 2d and 3d Battalions took Mt. Majulo during the afternoon and prepared to seize Mt. Fallano (319 meters) on the left while the 1st Battalion guarded the left flank. The day's fighting was difficult for the men of the 7th Infantry, but they did an excellent job in battling their way across the river and in gaining the dominating heights on the other side.

The 15th Infantry, temporarily commanded by Brig. Gen. William W. Eagles, Assistant Division Commander, sent two battalions across the river south of Piana di Caiazzo. The 2d Battalion crossed at the west end of Mt. Castellone and broke through fierce enemy resistance to take the solitary outpost of Hill 141. The 3d Battalion climbed down the steep sides of Mt. Castellone, forded the river and drove on to take Hill 246. The enemy pulled back slowly, subjecting the two hills in the valley to intense artillery fire. The two battalions then reorganized and fought their way to the slopes above Piana di Caiazzo during the afternoon.

After the 7th and 15th Infantry were across the river and on their objectives, the key ridge above Triflisco remained to be taken. The 2d Battalion, 30th Infantry, made two unsuccessful efforts during the afternoon to cross and drive the enemy off the ridge. After dark the 1st Battalion crossed the jeep bridge that had been completed below the hairpin loop, advanced down the valley, and cleared the slopes above the gap. The 2d Battalion, followed by the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, came across the next morning. The 30th Infantry, under Col. Arthur H. Rogers, then began to drive north along the ridges toward Formicola.

In a little more than twenty-four hours of fighting and at a cost of 314 casualties General Truscott's hard-driving infantrymen had won control of the Volturno Valley from the Triflisco Gap to Hill 246 south of Piana di Caiazzo. By the morning of 14 October every battalion of the 3d Division was across the river. There remained the problem of getting supplies and artillery over to support the advance. The engineers managed to put a light bridge in below the hairpin loop and an 8-ton bridge across at the foot of Mt. Castellone during the first day of the assault. Company B, 16th Armored Engineer Battalion, then built a 30-ton bridge just above the destroyed bridges at Triflisco. The victory won by the infantry was matched by the superb work of the engineers in constructing three bridges under observed artillery fire.

To the right of the 3d Division was the 34th Division. General Ryder's plan for his crossing had divided a front of approximately eight miles between the 168th Infantry, which was to make the main effort toward Caiazzo, and the 135th Infantry, which was to attack on the right. The 96 guns and howitzers representing the division and supporting artillery opened up at 0145, 13 October; 15 minutes later the men of the 135th and 168th Infantry slipped down the muddy banks of the Volturno and waded through the icy waters to press their attack.

The 168th Infantry under Col. Frederick B. Butler sent one company of the 1st Battalion across north of Limatola, while the remainder of the battalion crossed 800 yards down the river. The 2d Battalion crossed in column of companies east of Limatola. Company L went over on the extreme left to protect the flank of the 1st Battalion. The leading elements of the 1st Battalion got across without difficulty, but the swift current of the river carried the assault boats so far downstream that the last men had to ford the stream. Despite a blanket of smoke laid by a company of the 2d Chemical Battalion, the enemy discovered the position of the 1st Battalion and opened up with machine guns in the flat fields and in the olive groves on the hillsides; artillery behind Caiazzo also shelled the battalion, which was pinned down throughout the morning between the river and the road to Caiazzo. In the afternoon the men managed with the aid of a rolling barrage from the 175th Field Artillery Battalion to drive on up the slopes. The 2d Battalion crossed without resistance and then fought its way into the hills southeast of San Giovanni. The 3d Battalion came across that night and aided the 1st Battalion in taking Caiazzo the next morning.

The 1st Battalion, 135th Infantry, forded the river just below its junction with the Calore and made good progress during the early morning of the 13th. The enemy appeared to be withdrawing without attempting to make a determined stand, but later in the morning the advance of the battalion was slowed by tank fire from Amorosi. The 2d Battalion came across during the day and had to fight its way through a pocket of Germans by-passed during the morning advance. The 1st Battalion the next morning drove on toward the Caiazzo-Amorosi road.

The drive of the 34th Division was considerably slowed by its inability to get supplies and artillery over the river. The 135th Infantry, commanded by Col. Robert W. Ward, put a small ferry

into operation early on the morning of 13 October, but the engineers experienced great difficulty in building their bridges. The enemy was in direct observation of all bridge sites and placed accurate artillery concentrations on the engineers whenever they approached the river. They finally managed to get a small bridge in near Squille on the morning of 14 October, but were unable to construct the 30-ton bridge below Caiazzo until the 15th. Up to that time water, rations, and ammunition had to be carried across the river by hand or in assault boats and then transported by carrying parties over approximately six miles of rugged terrain.

The attack of 10 Corps across the Volturno, which took place at the same time as that of VI Corps, was much more difficult and ran into greater troubles. General McCreery had at first planned to exert his main effort on the right in order to make maximum use of the approaches and exits through Capua and to gain a position suitable for helping the 3d Division during the early stage of its attack. Reconnaissance soon indicated that the Capua area would be the most difficult in which to force a crossing, while reports from the 46 Division along the coast were more optimistic. The decision was then made to attack on as wide a front as possible, with the main effort on the left where the 46 Division was to cross on a two-brigade front between Cancello-ed-Arnone and the coast. The 40 Royal Tanks (battalion) was to be moved by sea in LCTs to land north of the mouth of the Volturno. The 7 Armoured Division was to make a holding attack in the Cancello-ed-Arnone and Grazzanise areas; the 56 Division was to send one battalion across immediately west of Capua, while the 201 Guards Brigade made a demonstration from the hills east of Capua.

Throughout the 10 Corps area the land is flat on both sides of the river; toward the sea it has been reclaimed from marshes. Numerous canals provide drainage, the most important being the Regia Agnena Nuova Canal, which parallels the north side of the river from Capua to the sea. There are few trees on the south side to provide concealment, but a thick belt of olive groves, vineyards, and scattered timber runs along the north bank of the river. Observation was scant, for the two-story modern farmhouses dotting the plain provided only partial view of the enemy lines. The Volturno itself varies between 150 to 300 feet in width, while the banks rise from 12 to 20 feet above the water. Levees 10 to 15 feet high, which had been built on both sides to prevent the flood-

ing of the plain during the rainy season, provided defilade positions for the enemy. This factor gave the enemy a considerable advantage, for it made the use of the fire of our supporting weapons difficult. The depth of the water averaged about six feet, and no fords were found that could be used by equipped infantrymen or tanks; poor roads and ground soft from recent rains made approach to the river difficult except on the main roads.

The 56 Division under General Templer began its assault west of Capua before midnight on 12-13 October. The 201 Guards Brigade started its deception near Triflisco, and the 167 Brigade sent the 7 Oxford Bucks across below the railway bridge at Capua. Surprise was not achieved. The leading elements immediately met such heavy opposition that 10 assault boats loaded with men were sunk before they reached the far bank; the attack was then discontinued. The intense artillery preparation preceding the attempt to cross had failed to knock out the enemy along the river, though the forward troops had previously been withdrawn 400 yards to give the artillery a free hand. The demonstration by the 201 Guards Brigade resulted in one company securing a footing across the river, but the enemy strongpoints on the ridges above Triflisco made its position untenable. The company was withdrawn before daylight.

The 56 Division decided on the morning of 14 October after another feint that no crossing was feasible in its zone. All attacks in the VI Corps zone had been successful, and the 3d Division had completed three bridges over the Volturno. General Clark therefore altered the corps boundary so as to include in the 10 Corps area the line of hills running north and northwest from Triflisco. This boundary change deprived the 3d Division of its proposed means of communication around the ridges above Triflisco, but it gave the 56 Division approaches to the 30-ton bridge in the Triflisco Gap.

In the center of the 10 Corps front the 131 Brigade (7 Armoured Division) sent small parties of the 1/5 and 1/7 Queens across the loops at Grazzanise and below Santa Maria la Fossa before midnight on 12-13 October. The elements of the 1/5 Queens, which crossed near Santa Maria la Fossa, were withdrawn, but the small bridgehead in the loop north of Grazzanise was enlarged during the 14th. 10 Corps then decided to construct a Class 9 bridge at Grazzanise, and work on it was begun that night. This bridging operation was interrupted frequently by enemy shelling, but was

completed successfully by the 16th. Meanwhile the 7 Armoured Division under General Erskine gradually extended its bridgehead up the loop toward Brezza.

The 46 Division was given the task of making the main effort of 10 Corps on the left flank along the sea. Its objective was a bridgehead 3000 yards deep from a point east of Cencello-ed-Arnone to the coast. Since the enemy was covering the main roads and was accustomed to the British habit of advancing under heavy concentrations of artillery, General Hawkesworth decided to attempt to achieve surprise by playing on these points; his troops would cross on the flanks of Castel Volturno and Cencello-ed-Arnone, while placing an intense artillery preparation on the latter town.

The crossings of the 46 Division were, with one exception, all successful. On the 139 Brigade front the 16 DLI (Durham Light Infantry) and the 2/5 Leicesters got across northeast of Castel Volturno and repulsed an immediate counterattack. The two battalions then dug in along a secondary canal. On the extreme right of the brigade the 5 Foresters reached a precarious and exposed position northeast of Cencello-ed-Arnone. Two counter-attacks were beaten off during the day, but the enemy attacked again at last light on the 13th and overran the battalion's positions. Most of the men were later able to get back across the river. The 128 Brigade was most successful and had the 1/4, 2, and 5 Hampshires over by daylight on the 13th. They dug in along the road running northwest of Castel Volturno or west of it toward the sea and slowly pushed their positions forward a few hundred yards during the day. On their left two squadrons (17 tanks each) of the 40 Royal Tanks were ferried around the mouth of the Volturno and landed without loss despite enemy air attacks. The ground, however, was too boggy in most places along the sea for the movement of tanks; the higher, dry ground had been mined and had to be cleared before the tanks could proceed. Several were lost and the remainder immobilized until the slow process of removing the mines was completed. This task took longer than usual, for the mines were non-metallic.

During 14 October the leading troops of the 128 Brigade and the left elements of the 139 Brigade were able to gain on an average of 600 yards. No other advances were made during the day on the 10 Corps front, but by nightfall the 46 Division had six battalions across the river. Two ferries were operating in the 46 Division zone without being molested by enemy artillery, and

General Hawkesworth decided that there was no immediate necessity for building a bridge across the Volturno in his zone. The enemy began to show signs of withdrawing before the 46 Division, and by the evening of the 15th forward elements of the 128 Brigade reached the banks of the Regia Agnena Nuova Canal.

By 14 October Fifth Army had successfully crossed the Volturno River. The 34th Division had two regiments across, and the 3d Division had every battalion north of the river. The 45th Division under General Middleton was pushing its drive on the right flank toward the middle Volturno Valley. The main assault of the 46 Division had succeeded on the 10 Corps front, and the division had six battalions dug in between the river and the Regia Agnena Nuova Canal. The 7 Armoured Division was slowly extending its bridgehead toward Brezza, while the 56 Division was preparing to cross on the 3d Division bridge above Triflisco. The enemy had begun his withdrawal by the evening of the 13th, and our drive toward the Venafro-Sessa phase line could continue.

## 2. THE DRIVE TO THE WINTER LINE

15 October-15 November 1943

The area of the Fifth Army drive for the next month was an unusual pattern of coastal plain and river valley, bordered and at times almost interrupted by tangled hill masses rising abruptly from the level plains. The northeastern limit of this area was the Matese Mountains; the northwestern limit, a broken mountain divide, marked by Mt. Massico (812 meters), Mt. Santa Croce (1005 meters), Mt. Camino (963 meters), Mt. Sammucro (1205 meters), and the steep hills above Venafro at the head of the upper Volturno Valley. (*See Map 7.*) Beyond the divide lay the Garigliano and Rapido valleys, dominated by the hills overshadowing Cassino, and then the Liri Valley, the "gateway to Rome."

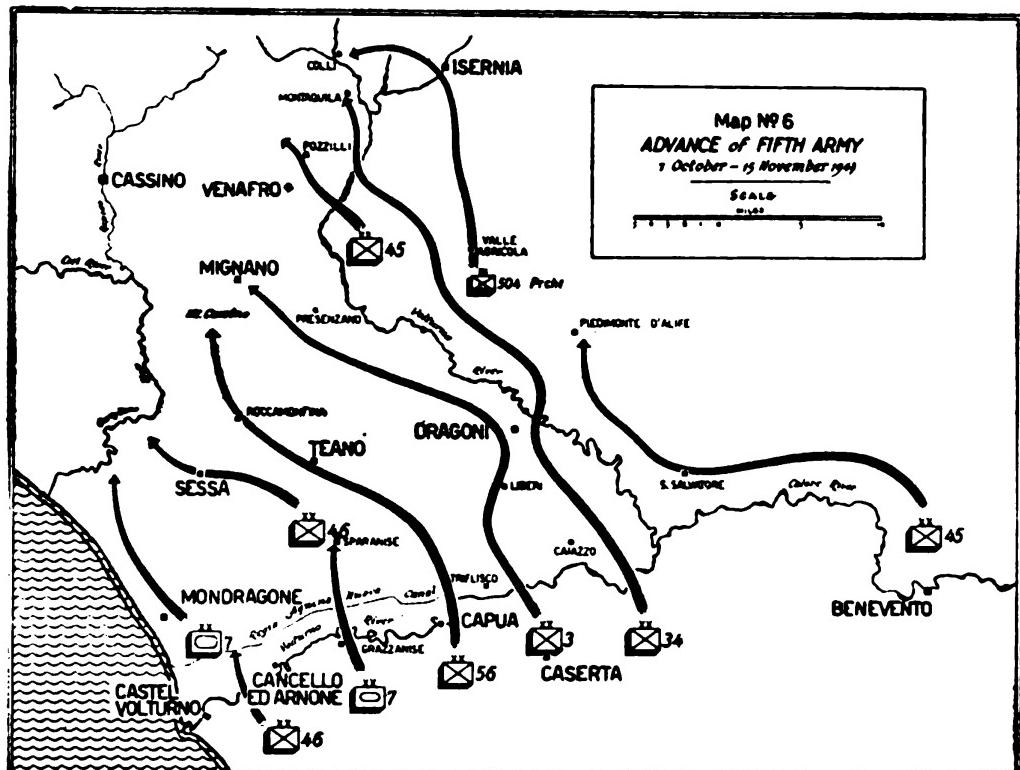
Along the divide the Germans were reported to be constructing a Winter Line, on which they boasted they would hold our troops south of Rome throughout the winter. To gain time for the fortification the enemy fought a stubborn delaying action across the coastal plain and in the hills on either side of the Volturno River, which paralleled our route of advance in its middle reaches. Demolitions and mining were used extensively. Almost every bridge and culvert on main highways—Highways 6, 7, and 85—and secondary roads was destroyed by the thoroughly trained

and experienced German demolition experts. Where roads ran through the narrow streets of the stone villages, buildings were blown down to block traffic. Trees were blown across highways wherever possible. Often these road blocks were mined and booby-trapped to present greater problems to the engineers. Some concrete obstacles were used to block strategic points on routes of advance. Intersections and shoulders of the roads were mined and had to be cleared before armor, artillery, and transport could be moved up to support the troops. Not only did the Germans mine the roads, but they were also lavish in the use of S mines, Teller mines, and booby traps in vineyards and orchards, along the beds and banks of streams, in trails and likely avenues of approach, in possible bivouac areas and buildings that might be used by troops, and even in shell and bomb craters where the soldier might take refuge.

In the retreat to the Winter Line the enemy employed self-propelled guns, mortars, rocket launchers, and tanks as roving artillery efficiently and with good effect. The rocket launchers, such as the six-barreled Nebelwerfer and the ten-barreled weapon mounted on a halftrack, were first encountered in the Volturno Valley about the middle of October. Mortars and artillery were often zeroed in on draws, road intersections, stream crossings, and probable strongpoints before they were used or occupied. Throughout October enemy air support to his ground troops was very restricted, for our air force and antiaircraft artillery made raids dangerous. The high point was reached on the 15th, when more than 75 fighter-bombers attacked bridges and communications in the vicinity of Caiazzo; of these planes at least 7 were destroyed.

Early in the Italian campaign the Germans attempted to block highways and prevent movement by placing self-propelled guns and machine guns in well protected positions near sharp curves in the roads. During October they tended to change to delaying action from forward slopes and crests of hills, with mortars and artillery on the reverse slopes or in the valleys behind them. Small, mobile groups of infantry fought from hastily scooped foxholes on the slopes, from behind boulders and stone walls, and from the brush and olive groves on the hills. Little detachments were often left behind with machine guns after a village or position had been abandoned.

Such delaying action imposed caution upon our advance, which



nevertheless pressed forward as rapidly as possible. In the 10 Corps zone the British pushed some seven miles across the fertile coastal plain toward the high ridge running southwest from Mt. Santa Croce above Roccamonfina through Mt. Massico to Mondragone on the sea. (See Map 6.) The area immediately across the Volturno was cleared of enemy rear guards on 14-22 October by the three divisions of 10 Corps moving abreast, the 56 Division on the right, the 7 Armoured Division in the center, and the 46 Division on the left. After the 7 Armoured Division had taken Sparanise on the 25th, it changed zones with the 46 Division so as to operate in the more favorable ground along the coast.

The 46 Division in the center and the 56 Division on the right regrouped and then made an attack, beginning 30 October, on the Massico-Santa Croce hill mass, the former moving up Highway 7 and the latter taking Teano on 30 October and Roccamonfina on 1 November. The armor meanwhile cleared Mondragone on 31 October and pushed around the west side of Mt. Massico; by 2 November patrols of both the 7 Armoured Division and the 46 Division had reached the Garigliano River. The Germans then began a series of demolitions along the sea north of the river, obviously fearing a seaborne landing on their flank and rear. The struggle for the Massico ridge, which had been expected to be difficult, had con-

sisted of no more than the laborious removal of small but determined enemy machine-gun posts and the overcoming of delays caused by numerous demolitions.

VI Corps was by this time in position to join 10 Corps in an assault on the main strongpoints of the German Winter Line. Essentially the action of Fifth Army in the last weeks of October had been a great wheel to the northwest, following the curve of the Italian Peninsula; VI Corps, as the inland element, had had to cover more ground than 10 Corps and had, moreover, been forced to traverse the mountains and hills east of the coastal plain. The distance covered by the American divisions was further increased by the change in the corps boundary on 14 October, which gave the 56 Division the Triflisco bridge and the major 3d Division objectives. As a result both the 3d and 34th Divisions were turned to their right shortly after crossing the Volturno and drove across rocky, brush-covered hills toward the middle Volturno Valley. From the 18th the 3d Division moved northwest along the west side of the river; to its right the 34th Division crossed the Volturno again on the nights of 18-20 October and advanced along the east side of the river against stiff rear-guard action by enemy tanks and infantry. This sideslipping put the 34th Division in front of the 45th Division, which went into temporary reserve after reaching Piedimonte d'Alife on the afternoon of the 19th.

The 3d and 34th Divisions for the next ten days covered the VI Corps front as they moved up the Volturno past the scattered villages and crumbling castles of the area. Then the 34th Division turned to its right into the Sava Creek valley so as to leave space for the recommitment of the 45th Division in the center. The 504th Parachute Infantry under Colonel Tucker meanwhile came up to protect the right flank of VI Corps in the gaunt, gray Matese Mountains. Before our troops the Volturno made yet another bend, to the northeast, which put it in front of the 34th and 45th Divisions.

By 3 November Fifth Army was poised in positions from which its men could see the mountains of the German Winter Line. The 34th Division was in the olive groves on the slopes overlooking the flat valley of the Volturno, five miles wide, east of Venafro. The 45th Division had moved up the valley from Piedimonte d'Alife and was ready for its first crossing of the Volturno. On the left flank of VI Corps the 3d Division had thrust into the hills above Presenzano and had other elements in the open ground east of Mt. Camino; the 56 Division of 10 Corps to its southwest was also

studying Mt. Camino. The 46 Division and the 7 Armoured Division controlled the Massico feature and were sending patrols across the plain on the south side of the Garigliano River.

North of the Garigliano plain the land rises in a jumble of low hills and rolling upland to the massive complex of Mt. Camino, Mt. la Difesa, and Mt. Maggiore, which formed the southern anchor of the Winter Line proper. (*See Maps 7 and 8.*) The terrain along Highway 6, in the center of our line, was more open than any other portion of the front north of the coastal plain; just beyond Presenzano the highway enters a narrow valley between the formidable group of jagged ridges forming the Mt. Camino feature and a belt of gentler hills rising to the northeast. This valley is the Mignano Gap. A railroad, known later to our troops as "Express Highway," and Highway 6 run side by side for a few miles through the gap, then diverge near Mignano to pass on either side of Mt. Lungo, which with Mt. Rotondo forms a natural "stopper" in the bottleneck entrance to the Liri Valley. On our right flank the men of the 34th and 45th Divisions could look westward across Highway 85 and the railroad running up the Volturno Valley and see the mountain masses towering over Santa Maria Oliveto and Venafro. Men who thought they had seen mountains in Africa and Sicily were about to learn what real mountain fighting was.

The momentum of Fifth Army, however, was enough to carry it without a halt into one first attack on the mountain barriers of the divide between the Garigliano-Rapido valleys and the Volturno Valley. Elements of the 180th Infantry (45th Division) and the 4th Ranger Battalion under Lt. Col. Roy A. Murray, Jr., crossed the Volturno into the hills about Rocca Pipirozzi on the night of 2-3 November, before the main attack on the following night. The 4th Ranger Battalion, which was to cut Highway 6 north of Mignano, got no farther than Cannavinelle Hill, but the 179th Infantry, crossing in the main attack, took Venafro before dark on the 4th. On the right the men of the 34th Division waded through the swift and icy waters of the Volturno, here 10 to 20 inches deep, for the third and last time at midnight 3-4 November. Mortar and artillery fire from the mountains to the west was heavy, but the worst thing encountered in the valley was the extensive use of mines and booby traps; at the regimental command post of the 168th Infantry high in the hills to the east of the river the progress of both assault battalions could be followed by the explosion of mines. Nevertheless the 133d and 168th In-

fantry reached the hills by noon of the 4th and had taken their respective objectives of Santa Maria Oliveto and Roccaravindola.

For the next ten days the 45th and 34th Divisions tried to batter their way forward in the hills and mountains west of the Volturro. The 180th Infantry took the peaks of Mt. Corno (1053 meters) and Mt. Santa Croce (1025 meters) high above Venafro but could go no farther. Positions blasted and dug into the solid rock had to be taken one by one, and if they were not immediately occupied the enemy infiltrated back at night. His positions on the forward slopes were lightly organized, but the reverse slopes were held in strength and his guns were sited to wipe out anything coming over the crest. On 10 November the 1st Ranger Battalion under Colonel Darby relieved the 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, on Mt. Corno; on the following day the 2d Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry, under Lt. Col. William P. Yarborough took the saddle on Mt. Santa Croce.

The 157th Infantry was committed on 11 November in the center of the 45th Division line, but neither it nor the 179th Infantry on the right could gain Hills 640 and 769 above Pozzilli. The story in the 34th Division zone was essentially that of the same struggle against an enemy who was no longer retreating and of problems of supply that could not be solved by the hasty and inadequate use of Italian pack mules. Gains were scant, for we had already driven farther into the mountains than the enemy desired. By 15 November the attack was ended. The right flank of VI Corps was protected by the 504th Parachute Infantry, which advanced to Colli.

The other assault on the Fifth Army front in early November fared no better. Together the 56 Division and the 3d Division tried to take the Camino hill mass in attacks beginning on 5 November. The 56 Division got its 201 Guards Brigade part way up Mt. Camino on the left in desperate fighting, but losses and continued action had so seriously reduced the combat efficiency of the division that it was doubtful if Mt. Camino could be held if taken. Enemy artillery was very active, and counterattacks were frequent. Maintenance of the troops on the mountain sides was becoming increasingly difficult, for a battalion was required to man-handle supplies up to the forward elements. Extreme difficulty was being experienced in getting the wounded down the steep slopes. In view of these facts it was decided on the 12th, with the

approval of General Clark, to withdraw the Guards from Mt. Camino, an operation successfully carried out during the bad weather on the night of 14-15 November.

The 3d Division on the right had taken Mt. Rotondo and the eastern part of Mt. Lungo in the Mignano Gap on the 8th by using the bulk of the 30th and 15th Infantry; the attack of the 7th Infantry on Mt. la Difensa had failed to get over the cliff 50 to 60 feet high running north and south some 1500 yards along the top of the mountain. Difficulties in supply and evacuation similar to those of the Guards at Camino were experienced; enemy resistance was equally strong; and so the 7th Infantry withdrew its battered elements to the lower slopes of Mt. la Difensa.

### 3. REGROUPING AND NEW PLANS

On 15 November the units of Fifth Army were ordered to halt their attack, which had already virtually ceased. The causes for the halt were numerous. Fall rains, which had begun late in September with unusual force, made movement ever more difficult. Streams flooded and washed out the temporary bridges put in on the vital supply routes. Vehicles and men mired deep in the mud, and morale declined as the leaden skies continued to pour down rain. The entire supply chain from forward units fighting on steep hillsides back to the damaged port of Naples groaned under the burden of bad weather and extensive demolitions. Worst of all was the lack of reserves, for without fresh divisions a breakthrough could not be fully exploited; and as our men grew weary, they had no hope of relief. The tenacity of German defense in the Winter Line first slowed, then stopped our troops; the momentum of our drive, uninterrupted since 9 September, had finally worn down. It was accordingly time to reorganize and consolidate our gains in preparation for a renewed attack—the Fifth Army rhythm of attack, reorganization, and then renewed attack was being established.

New troops were actually on the way but could not be used in time to prevent the halt. The 1st Armored Division under Maj. Gen. Ernest N. Harmon began to land at Naples about the middle of November, followed by the French Expeditionary Corps, which had been formed of troops from the army being raised on the American model in North Africa.<sup>2</sup> The 2d Moroccan Division (*2<sup>e</sup> Division d'Infanterie Marocaine*) arrived at the end

of November, and the 3d Algerian Infantry Division (*3<sup>e</sup> Division d'Infanterie Algérienne*) came at the end of December. Furthermore, the Italian government offered the 1st Italian Motorized Group (*1. Raggruppamento Italiano Motorizzato*), which was accepted for reasons of policy. This unit came under control of Fifth Army on 31 October and continued its training at Avellino and Limatola. Service troops also swelled Fifth Army, the effective strength of which rose from 130,246 on 7 October to 243,827 on 15 November and to 326,857 on 15 January 1944. Against these gains Fifth Army lost the 7 Armoured Division and the 82d Airborne Division (less the 504th Parachute Infantry) in the middle of November, both units going to England. For a time in October it was planned to shift 10 Corps to the British Eighth Army to simplify supply and administrative procedure, but this plan was dropped temporarily. Fifth Army by December was a truly international army, with American, British, French, and Italian troops under its command and increments of the various nationalities on its staff.

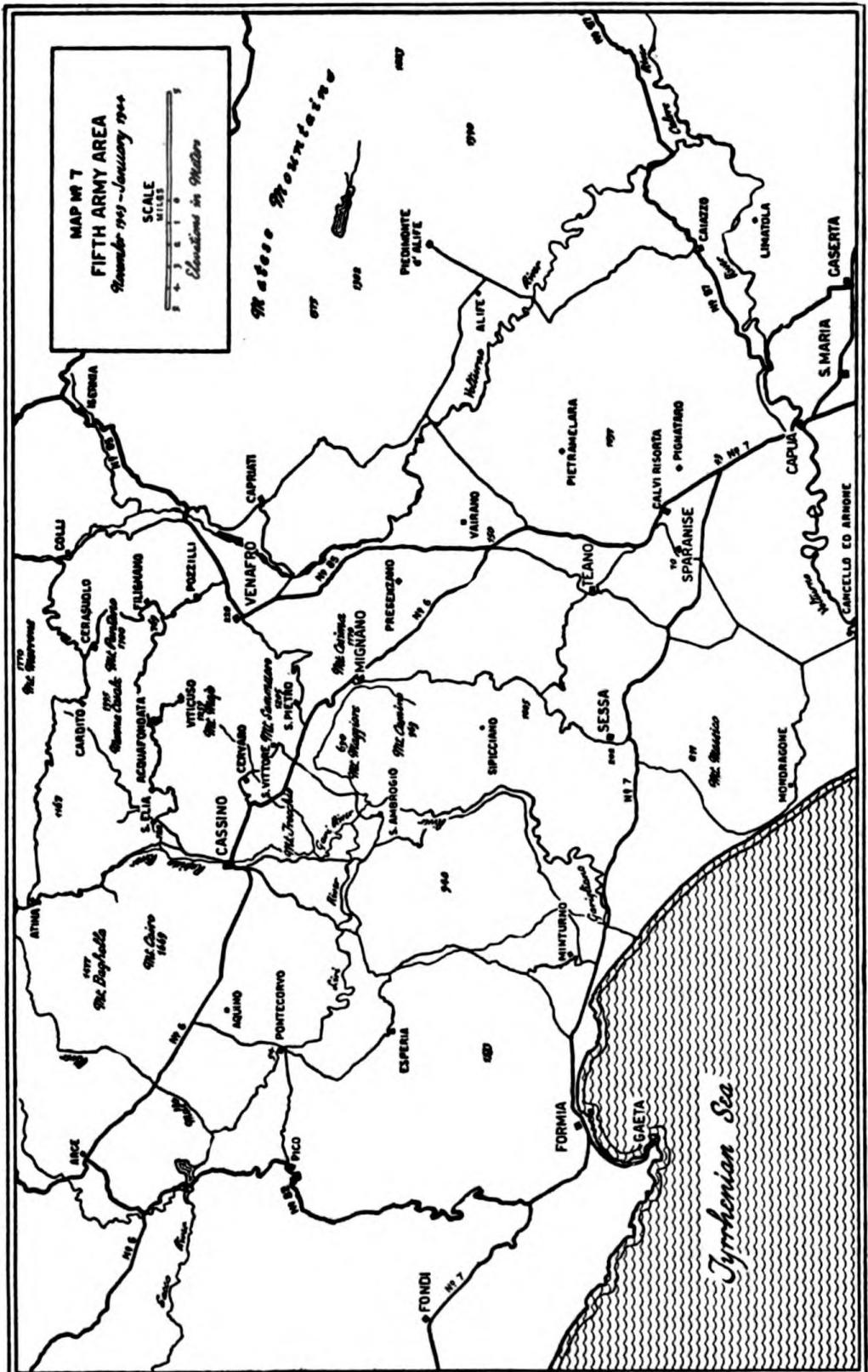
The general build-up and supply of Fifth Army were slowed both by the limited capacity of Naples harbor and by the needs of the air force, which required much shipping space for the supplies to improve the Foggia airfields. While Fifth Army was never without the amount of rations and petroleum needed for operations, its supply levels were often low in October, sinking to four days' supply of rations on the 6th and to three days' supply of gasoline on the 12th. Throughout the first half of October Class I and III supplies were being issued from Army dumps faster than they were being received from the ships; thereafter conditions steadily improved as Peninsular Base Section swung into action, and issues of fresh frozen meat, fruits and vegetables together with fresh bread began to mark the B ration.

Transportation, chiefly by truck and mule, sometimes barely met tactical needs in the drive to and through the Winter Line. Demolitions on the limited supply routes called for unending labor by the engineers to keep the roads open, and strict traffic control was necessary; in December four divisions were using Highway 85 from its junction with Highway 6 to Venafro, and an average of 4000 vehicles went past Venafro every twenty-four hours. The rail system in the Campanian Plain and to the north had been badly damaged by the Germans and was of little use until well into the winter; of more immediate value was the gaso-

line pipeline from Naples, opened to Fertilia, 12 miles away, on 12 November and extended to Calvi Risorta on 22 December. Pack-mule companies were at first improvised, except in the 3d Division, and were short of much vital equipment; after the arrival in December of Italian and French pack units the use of mule trains grew steadily more efficient. By 12 December the Army had 2,257 pack animals, and the number steadily increased. Without its mules Fifth Army could not have fought its mountain campaigns.

Shortages developed from time to time in critical items. The expenditure of mortar and artillery ammunition after our forces hit the Winter Line was limited only by the amount available, and rationing was frequently necessary. In October the tobacco ration had to be omitted eight days for the front-line troops, even though they received priority; this was a serious threat to the morale and efficiency of combat troops. Above all, the troops did not receive full issues of woolen clothing until after cold weather had started, and the types available did not meet the needs of combat conditions in Italy. This fact had been recognized before Avalanche was mounted, for on 1 September General Eisenhower informed the War Department that mountain or arctic clothing was needed for 50,000 men. Although Fifth Army eventually asked for 100,000 combat suits, only half that amount could be furnished by the Zone of the Interior, and none was received until the end of November. Socks and waterproof footwear were likewise short; the result was an alarmingly heavy outbreak of trench foot.

In front of our weary men the enemy forces were heartened by several small air raids on our troops early in November and were strengthened by the arrival of fresh units in the line. In the first half of November the Germans committed the 94th Grenadier Division on the coast and the 305th Grenadier Division on their left flank opposite the junction of Fifth and Eighth Armies. These two fresh infantry divisions, re-formed in France after their destruction at Stalingrad, thus held the coastal hills and the inland mountains while three mobile divisions defended the more open and important terrain along Highway 6. Then the Hermann Goering Panzer Division and the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division were withdrawn for rest, and the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division and the 26th Panzer Division came over from the Eighth Army front to take their place. This arrangement placed in line opposite



us from the coast inland the 94th Grenadier, the 15th Panzer Grenadier, the 29th Panzer Grenadier, the 26th Panzer, and part of the 305th Grenadier Divisions. At the end of November the 44th Grenadier Division relieved the 26th Panzer Division.

While the enemy rear guards had been withdrawing as slowly as possible before our pressure, German engineers had used forced civilian labor and all available reserves to construct fortifications which would serve as a strong holding line. The German command in Italy apparently had decided by the middle of October, on the basis of the successful delaying action in progress, that our forces could be stopped south of Rome for the winter. It had therefore set about the construction of a defensive line from the Tyrrhenian Sea straight across to the Adriatic. Conflicting reports, however, made it difficult for us to determine the exact course of this line, and the subsequent fighting showed that not one but two German belts of fortifications awaited our troops.

The main belt, called the Gustav Line, ran along the Garigliano River from the Tyrrhenian to the Gari River, then followed the west bank of this river and the Rapido River to Cassino, and extended along the forward slopes of the hills behind Cassino. On this line the Germans planned to halt us definitively; but in front of it, to protect the fortification work and to gain time, they constructed a temporary belt, which was eventually called the Winter Line proper. Though this second line was planned only to delay us, the success of the enemy in stopping our advance units at its outskirts at the beginning of November led to a decision to hold it as long as possible before falling back to the main belt.

However temporary in original plan, the Winter Line was a formidable barrier to operations of the Allied armies. On the Eighth Army front the main line of German defenses lay along the Sangro River from the coast inland to Castro di Sangro, effectively barring the way to Chieti and Highway 5 leading west to Rome. No armies could operate in the highest peaks of the Apennines, which form the backbone of the Peninsula and also marked the boundary between the forces of General Montgomery and General Clark. On the Fifth Army front the forward or Winter Line ran roughly south from Mt. Marrone along the hills above Venafro to the gap at Mignano between Mt. Sammucro and the Maggiore-Camino hill masses, both of which were held in force. (*See Map 7.*) The Winter Line continued along the east and south slopes of Mt. Camino and then jumped across the

Garigliano to join the Gustav Line. The entire line was a belt of defenses in depth without any single key. There was no opportunity for a brilliant stroke that could break it. Each mountain had to be taken, each valley cleared, and then there were still more mountains ahead and still another line to be broken by dogged infantry attacks.

In planning to smash these defenses Fifth Army had to consider carefully the terrain and road net. Highway 7, the coastal route to Rome, was useful to 10 Corps almost to the Garigliano, but the broad plain on the lower Garigliano was commanded by the hills and mountains beyond; offensive operations on our left flank would be difficult, and were in fact postponed to January 1944. In the center of our line was Highway 6, running through the Mignano Gap. The low trough beyond the Gap which the highway next penetrates, is dominated by hills of the Mt. Camino mass on the south and by the towering cliffs of Mt. Sammucro on the north. In the center of the trough rise first the bald back of Mt. Lungo and then in succession, like violent waves in the level valley floor, Mt. Porchia (277 meters) and Mt. Trocchio (447 meters). Past Trocchio—and less than eight miles from our front in mid-November—was the wide Liri Valley, which formed the objective of our next attack. This “gateway to Rome,” however, is well protected by all the advantages that nature can bestow. Mountain masses, such as Mt. Cairo above Cassino, bound it on either side; these masses in turn are guarded by the terrain features of the Winter Line.

On our right flank a tangled mass of mountains nine miles wide between the Rapido and Volturno valleys stretched north from Mt. Sammucro past Venafro to the main ridge of the Apennines. Highway 85, which branches off from Highway 6 four miles south of Presenzano, runs to Venafro and so gives access to this area; two minor roads cut through the hills, one stemming west from the Pozzilli road to Sant' Elia, the second running generally west from Colli to Atina. As far as the latter road the hills are a wild mixture of bare knobs and brush-covered swells; north of the Atina road the mountains rise swiftly to sheer cliffs and towering peaks over 2000 meters in elevation. Along the entire divide from Mt. Camino north the slopes on our side were more rugged than on the enemy-held side.

Though our retention of the offensive might prove costly and relatively unproductive, the alternative of settling down to the

defensive until spring was never seriously considered by our high command. Political reasons dictated the capture of Rome as quickly as possible. As a token of complete destruction of the Rome-Berlin Axis and as an indication of Allied military power to the subject countries of Europe, such a conquest would have its value. Furthermore, it was desirable to contain the maximum number of German divisions in Italy, both to draw men and supplies from the Russian front and also to weaken the available enemy strength for the expected invasion of western Europe in the spring of 1944.<sup>3</sup> The main question was not whether to continue the attack but rather how best to carry it out.

General Alexander planned a coordinated effort by Fifth and Eighth Armies to break through to Rome. On 8 November he outlined three phases for future operations. In Phase I Eighth Army, which had pulled up to the Sangro River against lighter opposition than that in front of Fifth Army, was to gain control of the roads in the area Pescara-Popoli and so threaten the enemy line of communications behind Fifth Army. (*See Map 16.*) If Eighth Army could drive up the coast to Chieti and then swing west on Highway 5 toward Rome, it might so imperil the German main forces, on the west side of the Peninsula, that the enemy would be compelled to pull back well north of Rome. In accordance with this plan Eighth Army proceeded to regroup its forces for an attack through the Winter Line on the lower Sangro River. In Phase II Fifth Army was to drive up the Liri-Sacco Valley to Frosinone. Phase III, an amphibious operation south of Rome directed on Colli Laziali, would then follow. The main Eighth Army thrust was to begin not before 20 November. In the meantime Fifth Army was to prepare for Phase II. If the amphibious operation south of Rome did take place, it was to be timed so that Fifth Army was within supporting distance of the landing. All available air support was to be given Eighth Army in Phase I, then shifted to Fifth Army in Phases II and III. These plans did not envisage any considerable change in the over-all strategy of the campaign; each army was to continue its main line of advance.

Though the ultimate goal of Fifth Army lay beyond Rome, the immediate objective was the control of the entrance to the Liri Valley. The fact that Fifth Army issued four operations instructions during the period 20 October-24 November, each with a different plan of attack, indicates the expected difficulty of gaining this first objective of its drive. 10 Corps on the Massico ridge,

exhausted by the drive from Salerno, felt itself in no position to force a crossing of the lower Garigliano. The brunt of the next attack therefore would fall on the divisions in the center and on the right flank of Fifth Army. During the two weeks' halt at the end of November these divisions received some rest, and the 36th Division was brought up to relieve the 3d Division in the Mignano Gap on 16-17 November. The command group of II Corps under Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Keyes arrived from Sicily in October and took over the center of the line on 18 November; VI Corps continued to control the 45th and 34th Divisions in the mountains at the head of the Volturno Valley on the right.

The final plan, issued on 24 November, recognized that simultaneous attacks by the three corps would be impracticable and divided the Fifth Army drive into three parts. In the first, 10 Corps and II Corps would take the Camino hill mass. Then II Corps would shift north of the Mignano Gap and take Mt. Sammucro, while VI Corps drove west on the two roads in its zone. The last phase constituted the main attack into the Liri Valley, for both shoulders of the Mignano Gap would have been secured in the previous phases. All three corps were to take part in the last drive in order to bring the utmost force to bear. Chief emphasis was given to the attack by VI Corps, which would continue its drive to seize the high ground north and northwest of Cassino with the assistance of II Corps. This unit in particular would develop the enemy defenses in the vicinity of Cassino and would be prepared to create an opening for an armored breakthrough into the Liri Valley. 10 Corps would protect the left flank of II Corps and then force a crossing of the Garigliano in the vicinity of Sant' Ambrogio so as to be ready to cover the left flank of II Corps in its push up the Liri Valley.

For the next two months the attack on the Winter Line progressed generally in accordance with this plan, but the advance of our units was everywhere slower and more difficult than originally estimated. Though II Corps bore the brunt of the action, every company of infantry which tried to advance anywhere along the line could expect to meet a crafty enemy in well prepared positions; concrete-and-steel pillboxes did not make their appearance in the Winter Line, but the dugouts were well protected and the mine-studded approaches covered by machine-gun and mortar fire. The weather and the terrain fought for the enemy, and grueling weeks lay ahead for the soldiers of Fifth Army.

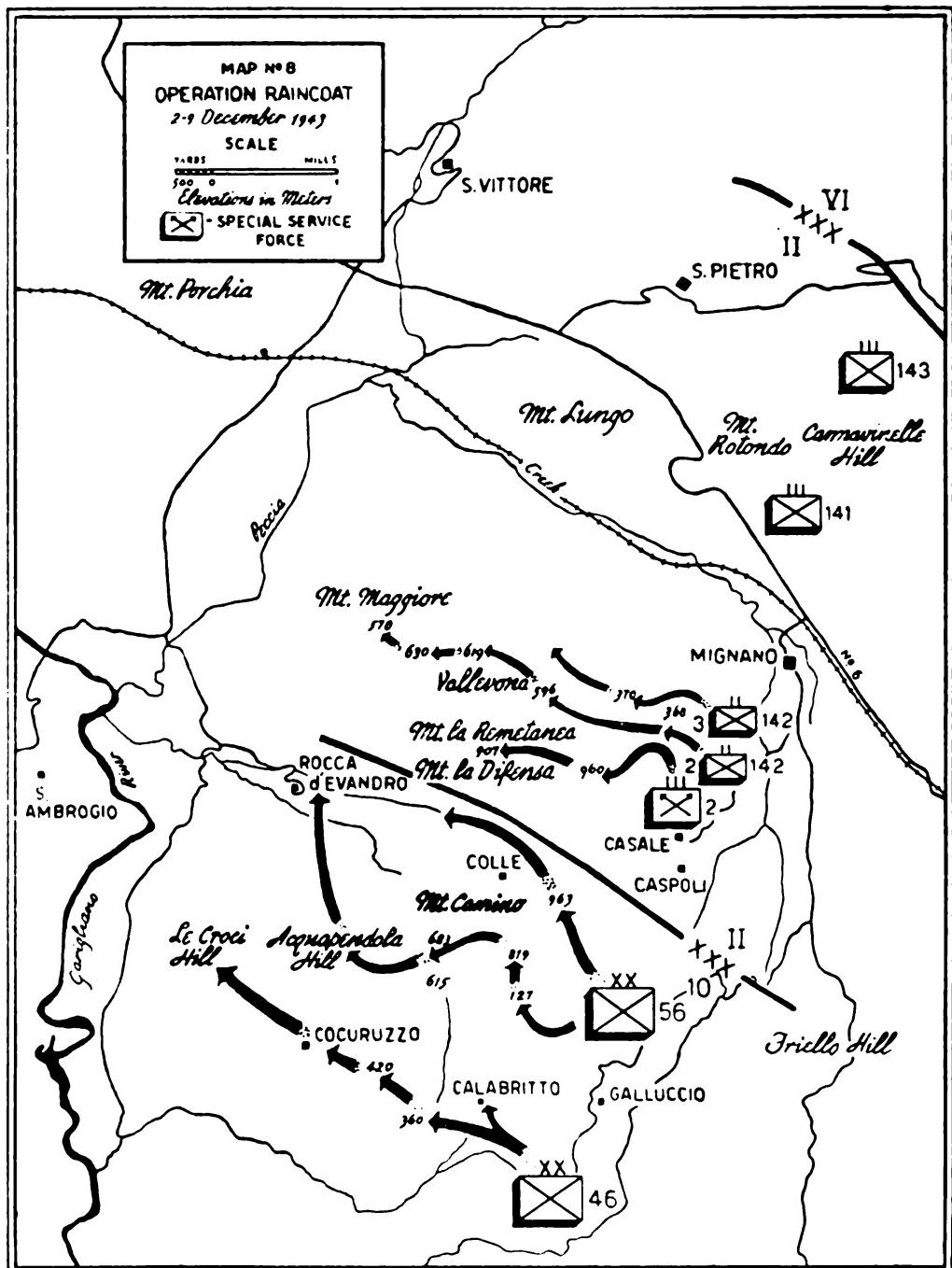
#### 4. MOUNT CAMINO

1-11 December 1943

The Camino hill mass, some six miles long by four miles wide, is composed essentially of three ridges running in various directions, which rise steeply on the east and northeast sides, then fall away gradually to the west toward the Garigliano. (See Map 8.) Mt. Camino itself, the southernmost of these ridges, consists of two main razorbacked spurs running approximately north and south, Hill 727-Hill 819 on the west and on the east Hill 963, crowned by a monastery. One mile to the north is Mt. la Difensa (960 meters), which bends to the west to Mt. la Remetanea (907 meters). North of the Remetanea-Difesa feature is the Vallevona Plateau, to the northwest of which is the third ridge of Mt. Maggiore. Early in November the 7 Oxford Bucks of the 56 Division had reached the crest of Hill 819 for a brief while, but at the mid-November pause our troops had given up their small foothold in the Camino feature.

The attack by 10 Corps and II Corps on these steep-sided mountains, christened "Operation Raincoat," formed the first phase of the new Fifth Army drive. Feints preceded it by the 3d Ranger Battalion toward San Pietro and by the 23 Armoured Brigade and naval forces on the lower Garigliano; the actual attack was initiated with extensive air and artillery preparations. Rain cancelled the flights scheduled by XII Air Support Command for the morning of 1 December, but during the afternoon sorties were executed for a total of 72 B-25s, 24 A-20s, 130 A-36s, and 48 P-40s. Included among the targets were enemy infantry and supply dumps on the reverse slopes of the Cocoruzzo spurs; to deceive the enemy attention was also concentrated on the San Pietro-San Vittore area. On 2 December our planes droned over the target areas 0715-1600 and flew a total of 612 sorties on their objectives, consisting of deception, communications, and concentrations targets.

Immediately before the infantry attack came the heaviest concentrations of artillery fired thus far in the Italian campaign. Starting at 1630, 2 December, 925 pieces of all calibers poured ton after ton of high explosive, white phosphorus, and smoke shells into the enemy positions. In the 24-hour period ending at 1630, 3 December, the 346 pieces in II Corps expended 64,068 rounds or 1,481 tons; the 303 pieces in 10 Corps, 89,883 rounds or 1,348 tons; and the 276 pieces in VI Corps, 11,048 rounds or 277 tons—a total of 164,999 rounds or 3,106 tons. Twenty-four 8-inch howitzers, used for the first time on an extensive scale, fired 2,208



The effect of the air and artillery preparations was not overly rounds and performed in a highly satisfactory manner. In this and subsequent attacks our artillery operated under the most unfavorable of conditions. Sunk in the mud, its guns could be shifted only by being winched out; to clear the masks presented by the mountains looming ahead, barrels had to be elevated and new range tables improvised on the spot.

great. Enemy prisoners of war from the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, holding the hills, agreed that there were even fewer casualties from the air attacks than from the artillery concentrations; the majority of the enemy was well dug in and suffered chiefly in loss of sleep. The air attacks were not always accurate, for the mountainous character of the terrain, combined with bad weather, made low flying dangerous and increased the difficulties of orientation for a pilot suddenly breaking out of the clouds. Targets suitable for aerial attack were comparatively few throughout our first winter in the Italian mountains. Enemy installations were scattered; lines of communication followed narrow, twisting roads and trails; artillery and supply areas were easily camouflaged. The targets which did exist could be damaged only by accurate bombing. Nevertheless, the general weakness of enemy artillery fire during our attack on the Camino mass was undoubtedly the result of the combined concentration of air and artillery on enemy gun positions, and some prisoners reported all communication to the rear was interrupted for two days.

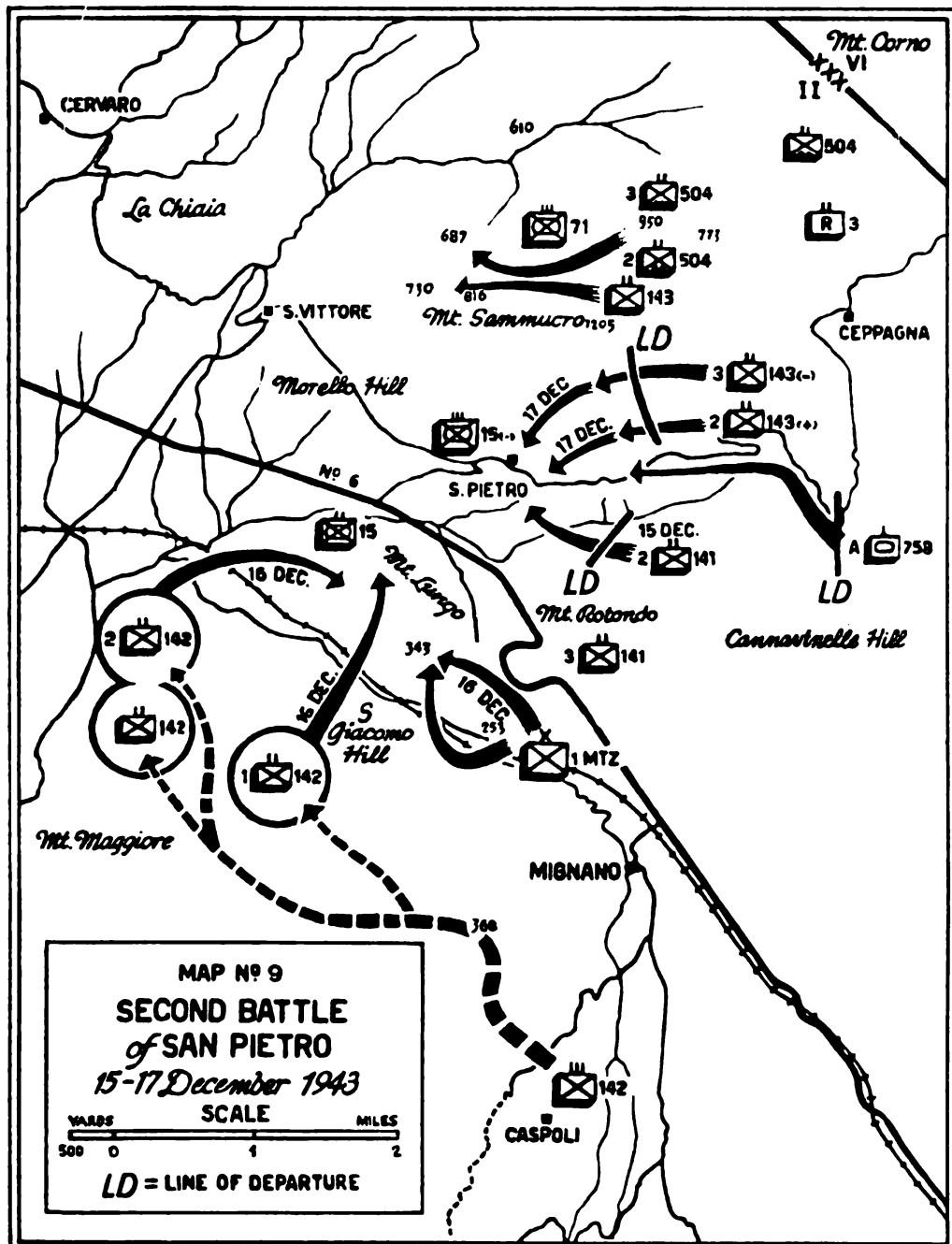
The 46 Division led off the 10 Corps attack on the Camino mass at dusk on 1 December with the mission of taking the Calabritto area and Hill 360 and so protecting the left flank of the 56 Division. Although the two assault battalions did not reach their objectives during the following day, the attack of the 56 Division against Mt. Camino from the south jumped off as scheduled during the night of 2-3 December. On the left flank of the division the 167 Brigade attacked up the ridge leading to Hills 727 and 819, while the 169 Brigade on the right undertook the extremely difficult assault against Hill 963. Leading elements of both brigades made excellent progress during the night. The 8 and 9 Royal Fusiliers of the 167 Brigade took first Hill 727 and then Hill 819 by the middle of the morning on the 3d.

On the right the 2/5 Queens of the 169 Brigade reached the monastery on Hill 963 by morning. Heavy fire from nearby rocky slopes forced the battalion to fall back. At 1000, 4 December, the battalion attacked again and was repulsed. One company occupied the monastery during the next day but was forced out by a counterattack. Meanwhile other units of the 56 Division had made considerable progress on the left. The 3 Coldstream Guards (201 Guards Brigade) had followed the 167 Brigade up the ridge toward Hill 819 and on the 4th swept westward to take two more hills (683 and 615). On the 5th the 1 London Irish Rifles (168 Bri-

gade) moved up to threaten Colle, west of Hill 963. These maneuvers caused the enemy to give up Hill 963, and by late afternoon on the 6th the 2/5 Queens occupied the crest of Mt. Camino. During the next three days 10 Corps proceeded to mop up the western slopes of the Camino hills to the Garigliano; on the 9th the Guards, aided by a diversion from the 1 London Scots, captured Rocca d' Evandro and so ended the last enemy delaying action.

While 10 Corps was making the main effort against Mt. Camino, units of II Corps moved out to attack the northern part of the Camino hill mass, striking from the northeast. The 1st Special Service Force, a mixed American and Canadian force of six battalions under Col. Robert T. Frederick, advanced against Mt. la Difensa after dark on 2 December. This attack was spearheaded by the 2d Regiment, which marched north from the vicinity of Casale across the lower slopes of La Difensa to Ridge 368 and then turned southwest to climb up to the crest. Striking swiftly over extremely rough terrain, the 2d Battalion drove the enemy from La Difensa before dawn on the 3d and carried on to Mt. la Remetanea. On the next day the inevitable German counterattack compelled the Force to pull back to a defensive position on La Difensa. A cold rain fell constantly during the day, limiting visibility and increasing the difficulty of supply and evacuation. The 1st Regiment was moved up to reinforce the 2d Regiment, and during the next three days the Force cleared enemy troops from the Remetanea-Difensa area. Organized resistance ceased by the afternoon of the 8th, when Mt. la Remetanea was recaptured.

The task of clearing Mt. Maggiore, a series of peaks paralleling the valley of Peccia Creek, fell to the 142d Infantry under Col. George E. Lynch. The Difensa-Remetanea ridge dominates the Maggiore ridge, so its capture by the 1st Special Service Force was essential for the security of troops on the hills to the north; Mt. Lungo might also cause trouble and was accordingly smoked by our artillery during the attack on Mt. Maggiore. After the 1st Special Service Force had passed by on Ridge 368, the 3d Battalion, 142d Infantry, left its assembly area south of Mignano and crossed the ridge at 0300, 3 December, moving northwest to overcome initial resistance on Hill 370 and beyond. The 2d Battalion followed the 3d Battalion up Ridge 368 by an hour and swung northwest to attack Hill 596 overlooking the Vallevona Plateau. This position fell at 1030, and the attack continued around the northeastern rim of the plateau against Hills 619 and 630, which form the main



mass of Mt. Maggiore. In the afternoon these last two dominating heights were taken, and the victorious troops organized for defense while the 1st Battalion mopped up pockets of resistance.

Thereafter the 142d Infantry beat off several enemy counter-attacks and wrestled with the problem of supply. Operation Raincoat was very properly so named, for rain fell on 2-4 December and made the trails impassable even to mules. Two companies

of the 141st Infantry and half of the 142d Infantry were required to carry supplies for troops on La Difesa and Maggiore. The round trip of three miles from a point near Mignano to Mt. Maggiore consumed twelve hours. Air drops were attempted but were defeated by poor visibility, poor recovery grounds, and the proximity to enemy positions. By 11 December 10 Corps had relieved the last elements of II Corps in the Camino hills. II Corps could now turn its attention to the second phase of the Fifth Army attack, in which it was to shift its effort northwards to capture Mt. Lungo, San Pietro, and Mt. Sammucro. An Army order directed the beginning of the second phase on 7 December.

## 5. THE BATTLES OF SAN PIETRO

8-17 December 1943

Towering high above San Pietro, the cliffs and massive ridges of Mt. Sammucro (Hill 1205) were important in the enemy's Winter Line, but of even more significance in the ensuing battles were the village of San Pietro and the slopes above it, to which the Germans clung with skill and determination. (*See Map 9.*) The enemy defenses, planned to prevent a breakthrough along Highway 6, extended from the rocky, orchard-covered terraces east of San Pietro across the valley to Mt. Lungo. Two battalions of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment held the main line of resistance behind an outpost line which consisted of a series of mutually supporting pillboxes in depth, liberally protected by S-mines and barbed wire. Defense of the valley, less than one mile wide, was assisted greatly by the machine-gun positions on the bald, rocky slopes of Mt. Lungo on one side and on the olive-dotted slopes of Sammucro on the other.

The II Corps plan was an enveloping movement. The 1st Italian Motorized Group, attached to the 36th Division, was to outflank San Pietro from the south by capturing Mt. Lungo. On the north two battalions of the 143d Infantry under Colonel Martin were to work west along the south slopes of Sammucro, and one battalion was to attack Hill 1205. At the same time the 3d Ranger Battalion under Lt. Col. Herman W. Dammer was to capture Hill 950, a mile to the north of Mt. Sammucro. No movement was planned through "Death Valley," the trough between San Pietro and Mt. Lungo.

Moving out from Ceppagna at 1700, 7 December, the 1st Bat-

talion, 143d Infantry, attacked Hill 1205. In a skillful approach the assault company took the enemy by surprise, swarmed over the hilltop just before dawn, and blasted the Germans out of their emplacements with grenades. The enemy counterattacked strongly and nearly succeeded in regaining the hill by 0930, 8 December. Reinforcements brought up by the battalion commander threw back the counterattack an hour later, and the issue was no longer in doubt. The crest of Sammucro had fallen, and the enemy's positions all the way to San Vittore were threatened.

The 3d Ranger Battalion met equally strong resistance in its attack against Hill 950. At dusk on the 7th the Rangers left their assembly area southwest of Venafro, went down the road to Cepagna, then turned north out of the village along the lower slopes of the ridge running northwest to Hill 950. Overcoming outposts and machine-gun nests, the leading elements seized their objective early on the 8th. A counterattack from the northwest forced them to withdraw to Hill 773, where they reorganized. After a preparation fired by the 131st Field Artillery Battalion at 0530, 9 December, the Rangers again attacked Hill 950 and occupied it thirty minutes later. During the next four days, 10-13 December, the enemy launched numerous counterattacks against Hills 1205 and 950, concentrating his attention on the former under orders to recover the lost ground at all costs. The 3d Battalion, 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, which had been committed in the sector, lost heavily. Accurate mortar and artillery fire broke up these attacks before they could make serious progress, and demonstrated again the utmost importance of dominating terrain.

On 7 December the 1st Italian Motorized Group under Brig. Gen. Vincenzo da Pino completed the relief of the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, on the southeastern nose of Mt. Lungo (Hill 253). This group included the 67th Infantry Regiment, the 51st Bersaglieri Battalion, and the 11th Field Artillery Regiment. Artillery preparation for the Italian attack began at 0550, 8 December, 30 minutes before H-hour. A very heavy fog came in after the "Serenade" ceased and settled over the barren, rocky knobs of Lungo like a huge smoke screen. At 0630 the Italians jumped off in their attack against the 3d Battalion, 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, holding Mt. Lungo. The 1st Battalion, 67th Infantry Regiment, drove through the fog toward Hill 343 but could make little progress in the face of heavy machine-gun and mortar fire even after an artillery concentration was placed on the hill. The

2d Battalion advanced up to Hill 253 while the 51st Bersaglieri Battalion attacked along the railroad toward San Giacomo Hill in the Peccia Creek valley. By 1130 the forward elements had suffered heavy casualties, but they courageously reformed for another attack. All of the II Corps artillery was made available to support the effort, but by noon it was apparent that the Italians could not succeed. Early in the afternoon, while the Italians reorganized for defense on Hill 253, the 141st Infantry under Colonel Werner committed a company on Mt. Rotondo to protect against a possible breakthrough. Eight-inch howitzers of the 194th Field Artillery Battalion swept the crest of Lungo and the draw on the southwest side at 1530, and an hour later the 155th Field Artillery Battalion fired the first of five concentrations on Hill 343. Against this terrific fire the enemy was unable to press his advantage.

No greater success attended the efforts of the 143d Infantry in its attack on San Pietro, the usual Italian village of closely packed, stone-and-mortar houses. The 2d Battalion moved out at midnight 7-8 December from Cannavinelle Hill to the line of departure, which was a draw on the slopes of Sammucro north of the Venafro-San Pietro road and one mile east of San Pietro. Crossing the line of departure at 0620, 8 December, the assault companies could advance only 400 yards against the heavy mortar, artillery, and machine-gun fire. The 3d Battalion was then committed, with one company on the left and two on the right of the 2d Battalion, but still no headway could be made. By nightfall the enemy lines remained essentially unchanged. Throughout the night and the early morning of the 9th the 131st and 133d Field Artillery Battalions shelled the enemy's positions. The infantry renewed the attack in the morning and continued the effort until dusk. Again the gains were insignificant, and the troops were ordered to fall back behind the line of departure while our artillery poured shells into the almost impregnable emplacements of the enemy.

For the next few days there was little action against San Pietro itself, and our main effort was directed to clearing the enemy from the western slopes of Mt. Sammucro. Every approach to San Pietro was covered by flanking fire from positions still held by the enemy on Mt. Sammucro and Mt. Lungo. Although Mt. Sammucro is dominated by Hill 1205, there were lesser peaks which the enemy had organized strongly, including the triangle of Hills 816, 730, and 687. In the plan for the second battle of San Pietro,

General Walker of the 36th Division ordered an attack against this triangle to take place in the early hours of 15 December, followed at noon by the main attack of the 141st and 143d Infantry against San Pietro; the 142d Infantry and the 1st Italian Motorized Group were to attack Mt. Lungo, the former from the south at 1750 and the latter from the southeast after dawn on the 16th.

The 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, moved out shortly after midnight on the 15th to attack Hill 730, but was pinned down in front of Hill 816. At 1000 the fighting strength of the 1st Battalion was about 155 men, whose ammunition had been exhausted. Pack trains replenished supplies during the afternoon, and the attack was continued on the 16th. A knoll close to Hill 730 was occupied, but the main objective could not be taken. The 504th Parachute Infantry, which had relieved the Rangers on Hill 950, could do no more than establish itself on the lower slopes of Hill 687, its objective.

Along the lower slopes of Sammucro a coordinated assault by tanks and infantry was attempted by the rest of the 143d Infantry and the 753d Tank Battalion. The 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, held a line extending halfway down the mountain from the cliffs, while the 2d Battalion occupied the line on down to the Venafro-San Pietro road. These two battalions resumed the attack at 1200, 15 December, together with Company A, 753d Tank Battalion, which was committed in this attack on the possibility that tanks could get through the formidable defenses and clear the way for our infantry to enter San Pietro. The terrain, however, proved to be extremely difficult for tank operations. The narrow road was mined and the ground on either side was a series of rock-walled terraces three to seven feet high, covered with olive trees and scrub growth. Stream beds, gullies, and accidents of terrain prevented cross-country operation. Trees limited visibility to about 25 yards and rain had made the ground very soft.

Prior to H-hour the artillery, including 8-inch howitzers, fired its prearranged concentrations on the enemy positions and smoked Mt. Lungo to screen the attack from observation on the left. Two tanks succeeded in reaching the outskirts of San Pietro, where one of them was destroyed. Four were disabled by mines, four more were disabled or destroyed by artillery fire, two threw their tracks, and two turned over on the terraces. At the close of the day only four tanks were able to return to their assembly area. Seven had been destroyed and five disabled. The infantry attack had been as

unsuccessful; the German emplacements, held by the 2d Battalion, 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, could not be captured.

The line of departure for the attack planned by the 141st Infantry across the valley toward San Pietro was about a mile north of Mt. Rotondo. Leading the assault, the 2d Battalion jumped off at 1253 but was met at once by heavy fire from the front and both flanks. Each company paid heavily for the few yards gained; by 2000 the rifle companies were down to an average of 52 officers and men each. The attack was renewed at 0100, 16 December. By that time all communications had been destroyed, and supporting artillery fires could not be arranged. Nevertheless, our infantry stormed the defenses with grenades, and succeeded in getting a few men into San Pietro. Reorganization at 0200 revealed that the 2d Battalion had a total strength of 130 officers and men; but the attack was renewed at 0600. No further progress could be made, and by the middle of the afternoon most of the troops had returned to the line of departure.

While the units on the right and center were meeting little success, the 142d Infantry was attacking Mt. Lungo. In preparation for its attack the regiment occupied San Giacomo Hill between Mts. Lungo and Maggiore on 12 December, and during the night captured Hill 141 on the northwest nose of Maggiore and Hill 72 a mile to the north. These preliminary moves having been completed by the 3d Battalion, the other two battalions assembled on the northern slopes of Mt. Maggiore on the 14th and began the attack against Mt. Lungo during the night of 15-16 December. On the left the 2d Battalion swung around to the west nose of Lungo and pressed forward vigorously up the ridge. After destroying numerous machine-gun emplacements this battalion reached its initial objectives on the top of Lungo by dawn on the 16th. Equal success met the efforts of the 1st Battalion, attacking toward the center of the mountain; through a number of individual exploits and well coordinated small-unit actions the battalion reached the crest early in the morning. By 1000 the mountain was captured, and our troops were mopping up. Enemy trucks, rushing reinforcements forward on Highway 6, suffered direct hits from accurate shooting by the 132d Field Artillery Battalion. Meanwhile the 1st Italian Motorized Group jumped off at 0915 to assault the southeastern ridge between Hills 253 and 343 and occupied it early in the afternoon.

The success of the 142d Infantry undoubtedly influenced the

German decision to abandon San Pietro. Within three hours after his last positions on Mt. Lungo were lost, the enemy launched a furious counterattack to cover a withdrawal. The main thrust was directed against the right flank of the 143d Infantry north of the San Pietro-Venafro road, where the enemy had maximum concealment. This counterattack ended shortly after midnight, and patrols after daylight on the 17th found the elaborate defenses abandoned. Our lines moved forward to the town and the high ground to the north; the enemy had withdrawn to his next defensive line running through Cedro Hill, Mt. Porchia, San Vittore, and northeast into the mountains west of Venafro.

In the latter area VI Corps had been intermittently active since the end of November in an effort both to drive west to the upper Rapido Valley and to pin down German troops which might otherwise be committed against II Corps. If VI Corps could push through on the Colli-Atina and the Filignano-Sant' Elia roads, it might outflank the German positions near Cassino and so materially assist the advance of Fifth Army. The terrain, however, was difficult, for though the scrub-covered hills appeared from a distance to have an even slope, closer acquaintance revealed rocky ravines and difficult ascents, where cover was scant and communications difficult. Further, the steep peaks on the corps right flank and the trackless hills on the left tended to limit our action to the area immediately on either side of and between the two vital roads.

While the Camino mass was being won, VI Corps engaged in limited-objective attacks beginning on 29 November. (See Map 7.) The 34th Division on the right sent the 133d Infantry west on the Colli-Atina road and the 168th Infantry against Mt. Pantano; the 45th Division on the left was to open a portion of the Filignano-Sant' Elia road and assist the attack on Pantano. The 179th Infantry under Col. Malcolm R. Kammerer spent 1-9 December in wearing down the enemy garrison on the barren plateau of Hill 769. Through the dogged persistence of its companies and platoons the 179th Infantry held the hill by the 9th. Meanwhile the 133d Infantry, commanded by Col. Carley L. Marshall, with the 100th Battalion attached, relieved the 504th Parachute Infantry on 24-25 November, but made scant gains in its attacks during 29 November-3 December. The 168th Infantry seized one of the four knobs atop Mt. Pantano (1200 meters) but could barely keep it against severe counterattacks until 4 December,

when the 135th Infantry took over the area. An advance of little more than a mile had brought 777 casualties to the division, which was relieved by the 2d Moroccan Division on 8-13 December. Maj. Gen. André W. Dody, commanding the first French division to enter the line, assumed command of his zone on the 10th.

During the II Corps attack on San Pietro the troops on the right flank made a more extensive effort to increase their holds on the two narrow, tortuous roads running west to the Rapido, especially on the Colli-Atina road. Ammunition restrictions placed at the beginning of December caused some limitations on artillery fires, but the weather permitted extensive air support in front of VI Corps on 10-18 December. The 2d Moroccan Division made plans for a wide envelopment of the enemy's left flank by its hardy mountaineers and *goumiers*,<sup>4</sup> but the maneuver group failed to get into position in time. The 45th Division under Maj. Gen. William W. Eagles, nevertheless, attacked as scheduled at 0630, 15 December, the 179th Infantry aiming at the hamlet of Lagone northwest of Hill 769 and the 157th Infantry under Col. John H. Church pushing through the hills south of the Sant' Elia road. Though opposition was stiff, especially on Hills 831 and 770 in the 157th Infantry zone, the enemy began to pull back on the 16th in conformity with his retreat in front of II Corps. By 21 December the French and Americans of VI Corps had advanced two and one-half miles along the Sant' Elia road.

## 6. THE END OF THE WINTER LINE

18 December 1943-15 January 1944

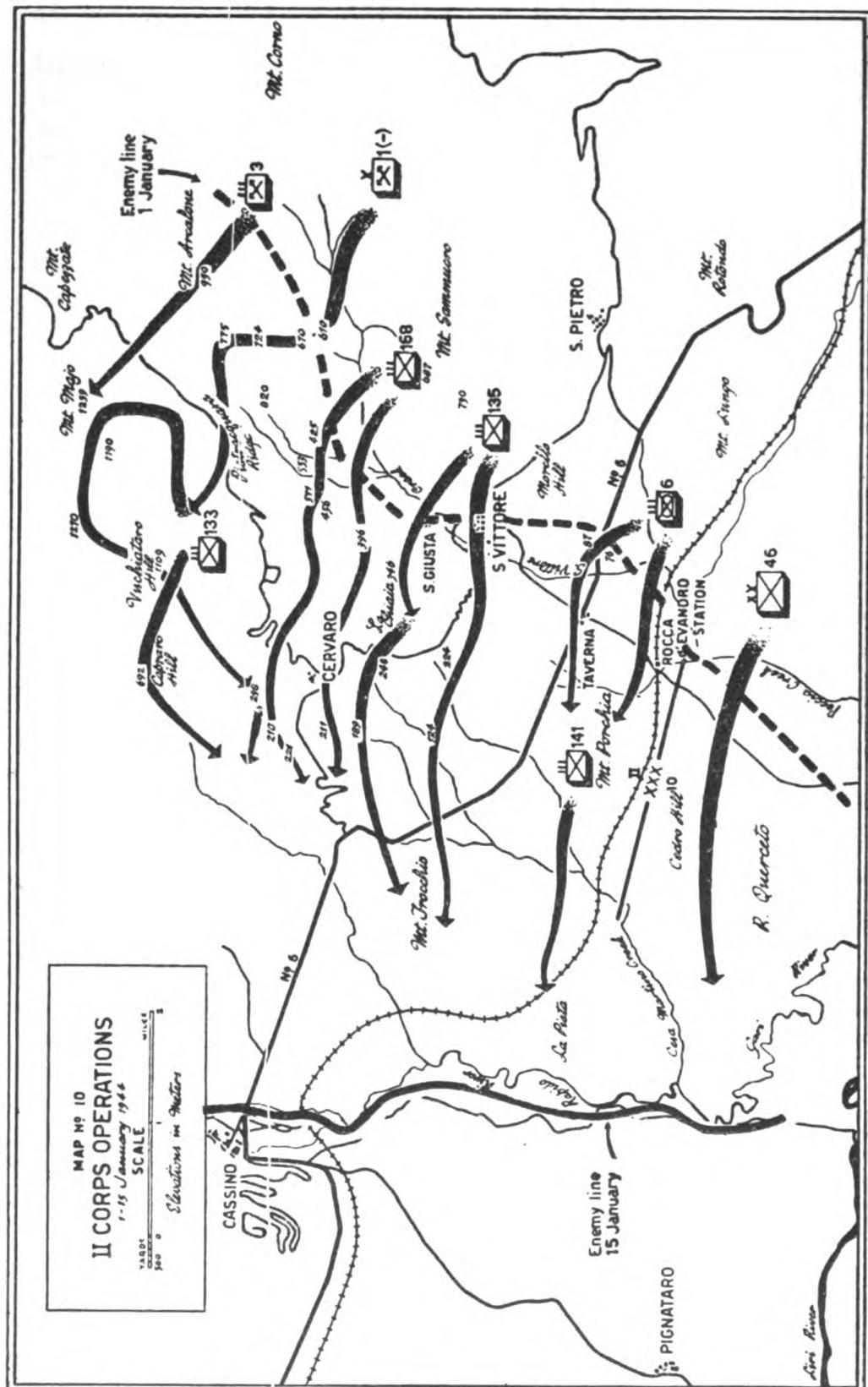
The last few days of 1943 were spent in regrouping, improving supply, and probing the enemy lines all along the Fifth Army front. In the 10 Corps zone the 9 Commando made a seaborne raid just north of the mouth of the Garigliano on the night of 29-30 December to gain prisoners and information for forthcoming 10 Corps operations. The 36th Division, the 1st Special Service Force, and the 504th Parachute Infantry made some gains on the western slopes of Mt. Sammucro, including Hill 730 on Christmas Day and Morello Hill below it on the 26th; but combat patrols which entered San Vittore two miles northwest of San Pietro on the 29th could not hold the village. By the 29th the 34th Division was coming in after a brief rest to relieve the 36th Division, and two days later the 6th Armored Infantry (1st Armored Division) had

taken over Mt. Lungo. In the VI Corps zone the French pushed ahead a short distance on each side of the Atina road; efforts by the 180th Infantry under Col. Robert L. Dulaney to advance the 45th Division front on 30-31 December resulted in the capture of one hill and an exhausted regiment digging deeper foxholes in the year-end blizzard.

On 3-9 January 1944 the 3d Algerian Division under Maj. Gen. de Goislard de Monsabert relieved the 45th Division, which passed to Fifth Army reserve. As of 9 January the 45th Division had been in the line for all but seven of the 122 days since it landed at Salerno. VI Corps now left the line to prepare for its expected part in a landing at Anzio, and the French Expeditionary Corps (FEC) under Gen. Alphonse Juin took command of the north flank of Fifth Army on 3 January with two French divisions and two groups of *tabor*s of *goumiers* at its disposal. On the enemy side the 5th Mountain Division had come into the line on the Sant' Elia road in the middle of December; the 44th Grenadier Division shifted south thereafter to the II Corps front where it reinforced the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division.

The way was now clear for the third phase of the Fifth Army attack, in which II Corps was to open up the Liri Valley and the FEC was to push onto the high ground northwest of Cassino. 10 Corps was to occupy Cedro Hill (140 meters) in coordination with the II Corps attack on Mt. Porchia and then be ready to cross the Garigliano in the vicinity of Sant' Ambrogio. (See Map 10.) Ahead of II Corps lay Mts. Porchia and Trocchio and the high ground north of San Vittore and Cervaro centering about Mt. Majo (1259 meters). Task Force A (the 6th Armored Infantry, reinforced) under Brig. Gen. Frank A. Allen, Jr., on the left was assigned to Mt. Porchia; the 135th Infantry was to capture San Vittore and push on toward Mt. la Chiaia; the 168th Infantry was to make the main effort in the hills north of San Vittore so as to break the enemy line where it anchored on the mountains; and the 1st Special Service Force (reinforced) was ordered to capture the high peaks on the north flank. Artillery, air, and armored support was available on a large scale;<sup>5</sup> D-day for the general attack was 5 January.

On the night of 3-4 January the 1st Special Service Force was in position to strike and moved north from Hill 610 in a wide end run to capture Mt. Majo and then turn southwest toward Cervaro and Mt. Trocchio. Supplies for this operation were carried by pack



trains which numbered nearly 700 mules by the 11th. By the evening of the 4th the 1st and 2d Regiments had reached Hill 775, and the 3d Regiment on the right held Mt. Arcalone. Two days later two battalions of the 133d Infantry with additional artillery were placed under Colonel Frederick's command, temporarily called Task Force B. Three high mountains remained to be captured during this end run on the right: Mt. Majo, Vischiataro Hill (1109 meters), and Hill 1270. During the night of 6-7 January Task Force B launched a two-pronged attack from Mt. Arcalone, with the 1st Regiment driving west across Pietracquara Ridge to Vischiataro Hill and the 3d Regiment thrusting northwest toward Mt. Majo. The assaulting troops moved out two hours before midnight. The 3d Regiment on the right, followed by a company of the 133d Infantry, drove the 1st Battalion, 132d Grenadier Regiment, from Mt. Majo by 0520. A strong counterattack was broken up after daylight, but the Germans rushed reserves forward in an attempt to take the hill. For the next three days the enemy threw attack after attack against the strategic position, and gave forward observers of the 93d Armored Field Artillery Battalion excellent shooting.

The bulk of the 2d Battalion, 132d Grenadier Regiment, held Vischiataro Hill when the 1st Regiment attacked. By 0415, 7 January, our troops were on the lower slopes of the hill, but counterattacks from three sides forced a withdrawal to Pietracquara Ridge. That night the 1st Regiment executed a wide flanking movement which caught the enemy completely by surprise. Moving north from Pietracquara Ridge to Mt. Majo, the regiment attacked west across Hill 1190, captured Hill 1270, and turned southwest against Vischiataro Hill. This time the objective was taken with practically no resistance, partly because many enemy troops had been pulled out to counterattack Mt. Majo.

These spectacular victories of the 1st Special Service Force took place while the 34th Division smashed at San Vittore and Mt. la Chiaia. The attack of the 168th Infantry, 5-10 January, in the hills north of San Vittore met very stubborn opposition; Hill 396, the key to La Chiaia, fell only on the 7th, and Hill 552 above Cervaro not until the 10th. San Vittore was taken by the 3d Battalion, 135th Infantry, after house-to-house fighting 5-6 January, and Mt. la Chiaia fell to the 2d Battalion on the 7th. On the same day the 3d Battalion moved out of San Vittore and captured Hill 224 to the northwest of the village and Cicerelli Hill to the west. A

German troop concentration west of La Chiaia was dispersed by 16 A-36s and 16 P-40s at noon.

In the valley to the south of San Vittore rise Mt. Porchia and Cedro Hill, assaulted respectively by Task Force A and the 46 Division. Resistance in both areas was stubborn, and counterattacks were frequent. Our advance elements held Porchia early in the afternoon of the 6th, only to be partly cut off by three infantry companies of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division which had been rushed from Aquino. With the aid of the 48th Engineer Combat Battalion, acting as infantry, Task Force A consolidated the hill on the 7th and held it against further counterattacks. Cedro Hill then was untenable for the enemy and was evacuated by his garrison, which had beaten off the attacks of the 138 and 139 Brigades on 5-8 January.

During the last six days of the drive on Mt. Trocchio the enemy stabbed viciously at various points along the line. But no matter how he shifted his forces, II Corps defeated him at every point. The Winter Line was crumbling rapidly, and the last hard fighting took place in the hills north of Highway 6. On the right flank Task Force B continued the wide end run begun by the 1st Special Service Force at the start of the month. The 133d Infantry, attacking from Hill 1270 and Vischiataro Hill on 9 January, captured Capraro Hill three days later. Then the 2d Regiment, 1st Special Service Force, took Point 298 north of Cervaro on 13 January. Meanwhile the 168th Infantry continued its advance north of the San Vittore-Cervaro road and closed on Cervaro on the 11th. The 3d Battalion drove for the hills just north of Cervaro while the 2d Battalion assaulted the town itself. Both battalions had their objectives by noon on the 12th and went on to mop up several low hills west of the town. South of the San Vittore-Cervaro road the 135th Infantry captured Point 189 on the 13th. The enemy then withdrew, and the way was clear for the attack on Trocchio.

Mt. Trocchio is a huge, isolated hill lying about a mile east of the Rapido River. At its southwestern tip is a small hill, La Pieta; together these hills guard the southern and eastern approaches to Cassino. More important as a site for observation posts than as a terrain fortress, Trocchio had little value to the enemy once the hills to the north had been captured. For this reason the success of Task Force B and the 34th Division north of Highway 6 made the German evacuation of Mt. Trocchio almost certain, and II Corps

pressed its advantage vigorously. The 135th Infantry, attacking at 0900, 15 January, climbed the rocky slopes without opposition and reached the crest of Mt. Trocchio three hours later. The 141st Infantry, which had relieved the 6th Armored Infantry on Mt. Porchia, met some resistance on La Pieta; but by dark there was practically no enemy opposition left east of the Rapido River.

Ahead lay Cassino, but the increased speed of the II Corps advance in the past fifteen days might well give rise to hopes that the push into the Liri Valley could be maintained as planned despite a lack of reserves. Action on the north flank was also progressing well; here the FEC had launched a drive on 12 January, which was by the 15th approaching the Gustav Line. In the first four days of the French attack the 2d Moroccan Division and the 3d Algerian Division advanced almost four miles along their entire front.

The drive in the period 12 October-15 January 1944 had consisted of three parts: the crossing of the Volturno and the advance to the Winter Line (12 October-15 November); regrouping (15-30 November); and the push through the Winter Line (2 December 1943-15 January 1944). In the first period VI Corps gained approximately 45 miles on its right flank and about 25 miles on its left flank; 10 Corps moved from the Volturno River to the Garigliano River, a distance of some 17 miles. American casualties had been 6,843 and British casualties 2,847, a total of 9,690. During the attack on the Winter Line the Fifth Army front moved forward from five to seven miles in the center but remained stationary on the flanks—a small gain on the map but one representing a considerable victory over terrain, winter weather, and the stubborn enemy. Casualties had been for the Americans 8,841; British, 3,132; French, 3,305; Italian, 586—a total of 15,864. Enemy resistance was stiffening considerably in front of both Fifth and Eighth Armies. The latter, which had attacked across the lower reaches of the Sangro River on the night of 19-20 November, had gained a bridgehead only after severe opposition and had spent most of December in fighting about Ortona, largely carried out by the 1 Canadian Infantry Division. Ortona was only halfway between the Sangro and Chieti, the objective set by General Alexander for the Eighth Army attack before it swung inland on Highway 5, but further advance was considered impossible.

### NOTES TO CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup>In November Rommel left Italy for France and Kesselring became commander of all German forces in the Peninsula, with his headquarters called Army Group C.

<sup>2</sup>Supplies of the FEC were furnished from French North Africa stocks as far as they permitted; the rest was provided on a lend-lease basis from American sources. Special rations had to be provided for the French and Moslem troops to meet their habits and religious beliefs, but for the rest little difficulty was encountered in supply and equipment.

<sup>3</sup>At the Teheran conference in November 1943 the Russians reportedly emphasized the need for keeping pressure on the German forces in Italy throughout the winter.

<sup>4</sup>Goumiers are Moroccan tribesmen, irregulars as it were, organized into goums (companies) and tabors (battalions) on a tribal basis. At this time one group of tabors was operating with the 2d Moroccan Division.

<sup>5</sup>During the drive through the Winter Line XII Air Support Command made repeated but largely unsuccessful efforts to knock out the Sant' Ambrogio, Pontecorvo, and Atina bridges together with the Melfa River bridge on Highway 6. The first three were not seriously damaged; from 15 November 1943 to 15 January 1944 at least 264 P-40s and 108 B-25s were briefed to attack the Melfa River bridge, and put it out of commission for 8-11 January.

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## CHAPTER IV

# THE BATTLE OF CASSINO

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### 1. THE GUSTAV LINE

**A**FTER 15 January an American observer might safely climb the rocky slopes of Mt. Trocchio, there to gain an uninterrupted view of the Liri Valley. His eyes could sweep its width and could follow Highway 6 as it ran across the plain below to German-held Cassino, bent about the lower edge of Monastery Hill, and disappeared in the haze of the valley on its course of 90 miles to Rome. Of more immediate interest was a little river, the Rapido, which cuts across the eastern edge of the Liri Valley less than a mile from Mt. Trocchio. (*See Map 11.*) Rising in the mountains of the French zone, the Rapido River plunges southwest about ten miles, then flows south from Sant' Elia through a rolling, upland valley past Cassino into the Gari River four miles south of that town. The latter river meanders lazily for two and one-half miles to its junction with the Liri, which drains the Liri Valley as far west as Frosinone. By their junction the Liri and the Gari form the Garigliano, a sizable stream, which continues south and southwest more than 15 miles to the sea and so completes the continuous water barrier in front of the Fifth Army line in mid-January.

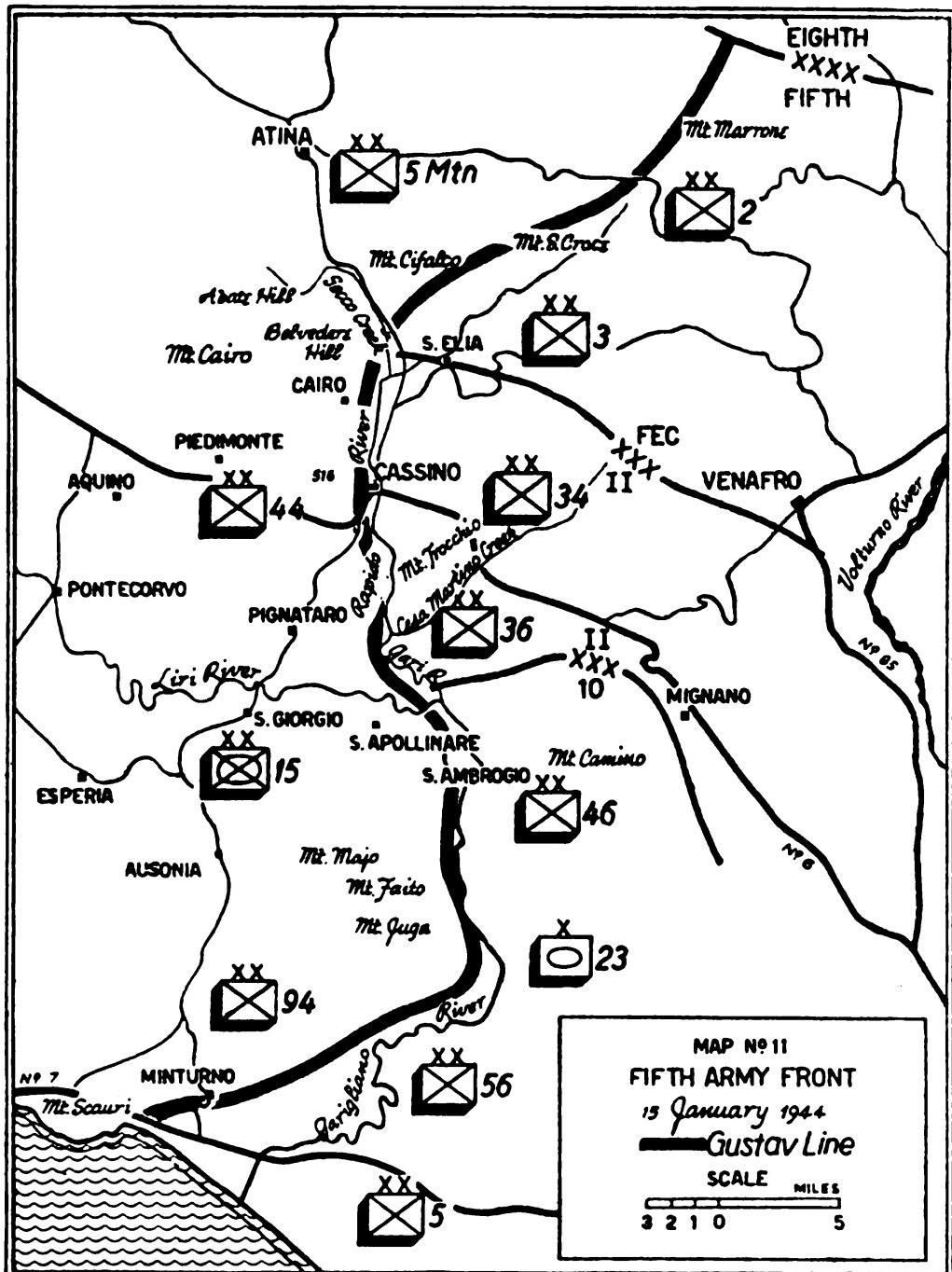
Behind the rivers lay the German Gustav Line, built by the Todt Organization to form the next great obstacle in our path. In part this line was based on the watercourses; in part it took advantage of the mountain masses flanking the Liri Valley on both north and south. Beginning in the Fifth Army zone at Mt. Marrone, the Gustav Line ran southwest to Belvedere Hill (721 meters) and then south to Monastery Hill (516 meters), crowned by the venerable Abbey of Montecassino and overlooking the city of Cassino. From the valley floor, 40 meters above sea level at Cassino, the hills on the west side of the Rapido rise steeply, one after another, to the great bulk of Mt. Cairo (1669 meters), four miles northwest of Cassino. Beyond Cassino the Gustav Line ran behind the Rapido and Gari to the Liri, and west of the Garigliano through the rough and steep mountains centering at Mt. Majo (940 meters) on to the sea at Mt. Scauri.

There were in general fewer and less carefully prepared defensive

works at each end of the Gustav Line than in the center. On the north the mountains were themselves tremendous obstacles. Here the enemy followed his customary practice of siting many mortars and machine guns on the reverse slopes, while automatic weapons in well camouflaged emplacements covered the forward slopes. Minefields blocked natural avenues of approach and every trail was swept by machine guns. The strongest portion of the line was known to extend from the village of Cairo south to Sant' Ambrogio on the Garigliano. Above Cassino the water of the Rapido had been diverted onto flat ground east of the river, making the area too soft for armor. The approaches to the river were extensively mined. Lavish use was made of the wooden box mine, which contains almost no metal and is hard to detect. Bands of wire were stretched along the west bank, and more minefields were laid between the river and the mountains. Very carefully constructed emplacements were blasted and dug into the steep, barren slopes west of the river. Large enough to contain living quarters for troops, these concrete-and-steel fortifications could withstand direct hits by artillery shells. Concealed communication trenches led to machine-gun emplacements. Fields of fire were cleared and so interlocked as to command all approaches from the east. Steep slopes, seamed with deep ravines, were numerous in the mountains north and northwest of Cassino; this terrain was thoroughly organized with wire, felled trees, concrete bunkers, and steel-turreted machine-gun emplacements. Observation posts in the mountains and in the Abbey perched on Monastery Hill gave the enemy a perfect view of the approaches to the Rapido.

Cassino was more strongly fortified than any other city thus far encountered by Fifth Army in Italy. Its stone buildings and narrow streets were admirably suited for defense. Snipers and troops with automatic weapons were garrisoned in strategically located buildings. Machine-gun emplacements, reinforced with concrete and steel and railroad ties, were concealed within the buildings. Self-propelled guns and tanks guarded every approach to the town, and a series of hills and ridges provided close-in defenses behind the town. On the slopes of these hills were numerous machine-gun emplacements blasted out of the rock. The north-south roads from Cairo and Sant' Elia and Highway 6 from the southeast were mined and covered by artillery, mortar, and Nebelwerfer fire. The muddy plains to the east were thick with mines and wire.

Though lacking the advantages of Cassino, the Rapido line south



to the Liri River was also thoroughly organized. Mines and wire guarded the approaches from the east. Other minefields and more wire lay west of the river. Pillboxes and machine-gun emplacements in stone buildings covered the fortifications. Artillery and Nebelwerfers farther up the valley and defiled in high ground on either side could cover nearly every foot of the river. South of the Liri River the Gustav Line was less strongly fortified than in

the Rapido sector. Here too there were extensive minefields and wire barriers, steel pillboxes, and concrete bunkers, but the enemy depended upon the mountains, which he considered to be practically impassable, to turn the scale against the Allied troops. Again the reverse slopes were strongly organized, while automatic weapons on forward slopes covered possible approaches.

On 15 January this line was garrisoned by XIV Panzer Corps, with the 94th Grenadier Division spread thinly along the Garigliano, the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division on the upper Garigliano and the Rapido to Cassino, the 44th Grenadier Division from Cassino four miles north to the village of Cairo, and the 5th Mountain Division on an 11-mile front northeast from Cairo before the FEC. The latter two divisions, much weakened by the Winter Line fighting, were reinforced by miscellaneous units. For reserves XIV Panzer Corps could draw on the 3d Panzer Grenadier, Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute, and 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions. Regrouping was also under way behind the enemy line to halt our advance; the 71st Grenadier Division came from Trieste to the 44th Grenadier Division sector in the center, arriving on the 17th, and the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division was moving from the Eighth Army front to bolster the Garigliano River line. Other reinforcements were on the way from north of Rome but were to be diverted to stem our landing at Anzio.

Our front, at the beginning of the offensive against the Gustav Line, extended more than 35 miles from the Tyrrhenian Sea to the Abruzzi National Park in the central mountain divide. On the left was still 10 Corps, with a screening force (Hicks Force) by the sea, the 56 Division and the 23 Armoured Brigade in the center, and the 46 Division on the right. Behind the Hicks Force lay the British 5 Infantry Division, which shifted from Eighth Army on 6-9 January. The II Corps zone in the center was held by the 36th Division on the south of Highway 6 and the 34th Division on the north. The FEC had likewise two divisions in line, the 3d Algerian Division on the left and the 2d Moroccan Division on the right.

In addition to these seven divisions Fifth Army had little immediately available in mid-January for the Gustav Line attack. Combat Command A of the 1st Armored Division, the 3d and 45th Divisions, the 504th Parachute Infantry, the 1st Special Service Force, the Ranger Force, and the British 1 Infantry Division (from Eighth Army) were to serve under VI Corps at Anzio. The 88th Infantry Division landed in Italy early in February but was not yet

ready for combat; the 339th Infantry, first element of the 85th Infantry Division to reach Italy, came in on 15 March. Reinforcements were still needed, and early in February the 2 New Zealand, the 4 Indian, and the British 78 Infantry Divisions were moved from the Eighth Army front. These three divisions, with Combat Command B in reserve, were to form the New Zealand Corps. Including the 1 Division at Anzio and the 5 Division in 10 Corps, five divisions eventually came from Eighth Army to back the Fifth Army attack of February and March. The FEC was strengthened by the 4th Moroccan Mountain Division (*4e Division de Montagne Marocaine*), which arrived in Italy by way of Corsica during February. On 13 February the French were further reinforced by a combat team of the 1st Italian Motorized Group, which took over a narrow sector in a defensive role; the rest of this group was used primarily on supply and guard duties.

Our weakness in reserves and the inevitable disorganization resulting from the hard-fought battles in the Winter Line might make a halt for regrouping and careful formulation of plans seem desirable. Nevertheless, the attack on the Gustav Line, soon to be called the Battle of Cassino, was to be pressed at once in accordance with the 15th Army Group plan for the capture of Rome as soon as possible. That plan, it will be remembered, directed Eighth Army to advance on the east coast; Fifth Army was first to push to Frosinone and then to launch an amphibious operation at Anzio. Although Eighth Army had been definitely stopped in December and Fifth Army was still well short of Frosinone, General Alexander on 2 January ordered the execution of the plans to land at Anzio, with a target date of 20-31 January. The reasons for this decision will be discussed in the next chapter; at this point it may be noted that his order required Fifth Army to

make as strong a thrust as possible towards Cassino and Frosinone shortly prior to the assault landing to draw in enemy reserves which might be employed against the landing forces and then to create a breach in his front through which every opportunity will be taken to link up rapidly with the seaborne operation.

A subsequent directive of 12 January, entitled *The Battle for Rome*, assigned to Fifth Army the tasks of forcing the enemy to withdraw north of Rome and at the same time of inflicting the maximum losses on German forces south of Rome. Eighth Army, now under Lt. Gen. Sir Oliver H. Leese, was to make what amount-

ed to a holding attack to prevent the Germans from transferring divisions from the northern sector of the front to that opposite Fifth Army. There was a remote hope that Eighth Army, despite its reduction in strength, might reach the Pescara line and develop a threat toward Rome through Popoli by 20 January.

In his order of the 12th General Alexander emphasized the importance of not allowing the enemy

any respite in which to reorganize or take up new positions. The momentum of our advance must be maintained at all costs to the limit of our resources. The enemy will be compelled to react to the threat to his communications and rear, and advantage must be taken of this to break through his main defences, and to ensure that the two forces operating under Comd Fifth Army join hands at the earliest possible moment.

After this junction Fifth Army was to advance north of Rome as quickly as possible to the general line Terni-Viterbo-Civitavecchia. More distant objectives for Eighth Army were stated as being the area Ravenna-Rimini-Faenza; those of Fifth Army were the area Pistoia-Florence-Pisa. In passing, it may be noted that Fifth Army finally reached the latter area in the late summer of 1944.

As a result of the decision on Anzio, Fifth Army was committed to a strong attack on the Gustav Line at once. General Clark's plans for the attack were issued on 10 January and followed for the most part the basic strategy already outlined in December. The schedule now ran:

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| 12 January | FEC drive on the enemy's left toward Sant' Elia.   |
| 15 "       | II Corps drive in the center to take Mt. Trocchio.   |
| 17 "       | 10 Corps attack to envelop the enemy's right by crossing the Garigliano in the Minturno area and pushing rapidly north toward San Giorgio. Simultaneously 10 Corps was to establish a second bridgehead at Sant' Ambrogio to protect the left flank of II Corps. |
| 18 "       | II Corps frontal assault over the Rapido in the vicinity of Sant' Angelo in Teodice.   |
| 22 "       | VI Corps landing at Anzio to threaten the enemy's rear.  |

The attack against the Gustav Line was therefore closely integrated with the operations which drove the enemy from the Winter Line. The French forced the Germans to evacuate Sant' Elia on the 15th of January; II Corps captured Mt. Trocchio on the same day. The time scheduled could thus continue, with British 10 Corps crossing the Garigliano River on 17 January.

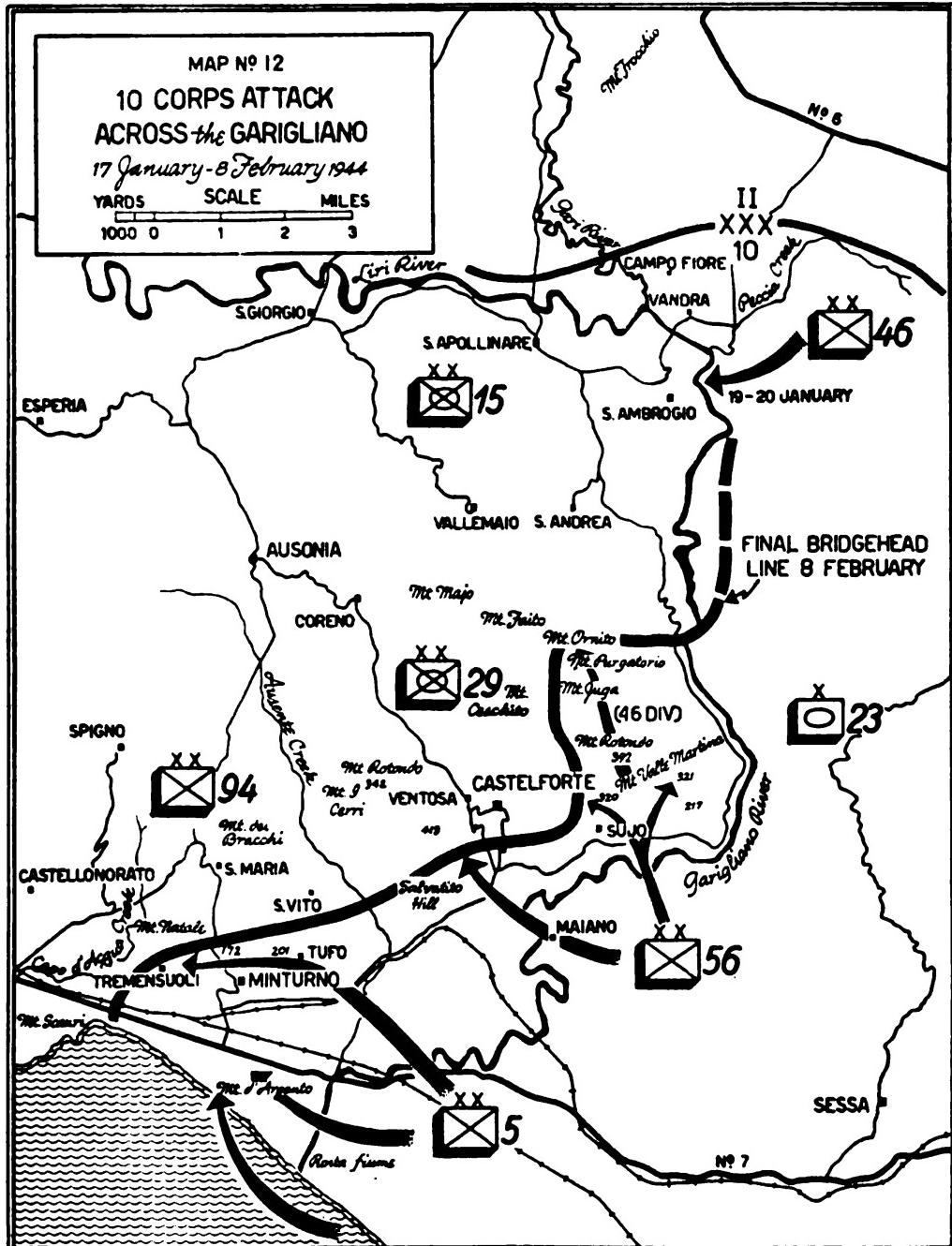
## 2. 10 CORPS' ATTACK ACROSS THE GARIGLIANO

17 January-8 February 1944

The valley of the lower Garigliano is a wide alluvial plain, most of which lies on the east side of the unfordable river. Near Highway 7 the plain extends west of the stream for two miles and then gives way at Minturno to rolling land and low hills, which command the lower reaches of Ausente Creek and the coastal road to Formia. (*See Map 12.*) Farther upstream between the river and Hill 413, the plain is less than one mile in width. Even here the hills west of the river were not in themselves serious obstacles, but they did provide the enemy with excellent observation posts and also served as the outer defenses of the Gustav Line. The high ground around Castelforte is an extension of the Mt. Majo mass to the north, and was strongly organized for defense.

A crossing in the Castelforte area had been planned in mid-November and then dropped. The arrival of the 5 Division brought fresh strength to 10 Corps and permitted a resumption of the plans. The main assault in Operation Panther, the 10 Corps crossing of the Garigliano, was to be made by the 5 Division under Maj. Gen. P. G. S. Gregson-Ellis on the left and the 56 Division under General Templer on the right, with the first objective of gaining a bridgehead between the sea and Castelforte. Then the 5 Division was to swing north on the Minturno-Ausonia-San Giorgio road to the Liri; in this attack it was expected to reach Ausonia by the afternoon of D plus 1. About two days after the initial attack the 46 Division under General Hawkesworth would drive across the upper Garigliano to secure a bridgehead in the vicinity of Sant' Ambrogio. Naval support was available on the coast; the air force made strong efforts to isolate the bridgehead area on 16-17 January but was unable to knock out the Pontecorvo and San Giorgio bridges over the Liri.

The 5 Division moved up secretly on the night of 15-16 January, and began to make a silent crossing of the Garigliano with three



battalions at H-hour (2100, 17 January). In the coastal zone the 17 Brigade sent the 6 Seaforths over at Puntafiume, while the 2 Royal Scots Fusiliers landed from DUKWs and LCTs about 2000 yards west of the river near the low swell known as Mt. d' Argento. The 13 Brigade north of Highway 7 had two crossing sites: 2 Wiltshires 1400 yards upstream from the lower railroad bridge, the 2 Innisks about the same distance below the upper railroad bridge.

All of these crossings, except that of the Innisks, achieved considerable initial success. Then came the enemy counterattacks, which slowed the advance. By nightfall on the 19th the 17 Brigade held firm control of Mt. d' Argento and had advanced to the railroad line one mile south of Minturno. In the 13 Brigade, carrying the attack toward Tufo and Minturno, the 2 Wiltshires gained and lost Tufo on the 18th; the following day the 15 Brigade was put in the line on the left of the 2 Wiltshires. Tufo was recaptured by the 1 KOYLI (Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry), and the 1 Green Howards advanced west toward Minturno. By nightfall the town was practically cleared of enemy troops. On the 20th the 15 Brigade fanned out to Mt. Natale, Tremensuoli, and the high ground overlooking Capo d' Acqua Creek; the 201 Guards Brigade, one of the last major reserves of 10 Corps, concentrated south of Minturno on the 20th for an attack on Mt. Scauri.

The capture of Minturno, Tufo, and Tremensuoli by the 13 and 15 Brigades, together with the limited success of the 17 Brigade on the left, gave the 5 Division a substantial bridgehead across the Garigliano. Reinforced by the 201 Guards Brigade, the division was prepared to continue the drive to capture Mt. Scauri and San Vito, which would complete its bridgehead objectives. The establishment of permanent crossings over the river, however, was a problem which delayed action here as well as in the 56 Division zone. Throughout the 18th ferries and rafts only were used; a class 9 bridge was opened early on the 19th two miles above Highway 7, but was hit by 1030 and temporarily closed. A Class 30 bridge on Highway 7, completed on 20 January, could be used only at night.

In the 56 Division zone there were two general drives during 17-19 January. On the left the 167 Brigade struck for the Hill 413-Castelforte area; on the right the 169 Brigade attacked the high ground of Mt. Valle Martina. Each brigade had two crossing sites.

On the extreme left flank of the 56 Division the 9 Royal Fusiliers (167 Brigade), crossed near the upper railroad bridge but was forced to fall back to the river. The 8 Royal Fusiliers had better success. Though late in following the artillery barrage because of heavy enemy fire which sank many assault boats, the troops which crossed near Maiano, had reached the road before dawn on the 18th, and pushed on toward Salvatito Hill. At the end of the day the battalion had captured this feature and part of Hill 413, the main division objective one-half mile to the north. The 7 Oxford Bucks followed the 8 Royal Fusiliers, protected its right

flank, and on the 19th went on to Ventosa, west of Castelforte. The 1 London Irish Rifles (168 Brigade), committed on the 19th, advanced up the east road to Castelforte and reached the outskirts of the town by 1100, but could make no further progress. Thus by noon on 19 January the 167 Brigade had reached but was held up on the line Hill 413-Ventosa-Castelforte. The 169 Brigade on the right likewise made significant gains during the first two days of the offensive. The 2/7 Queens took Sujo early on the 17th and went on to the high ground east of Castelforte. The 2/6 Queens, 2/5 Queens, and Commandos on its right captured a bridgehead one to two miles deep in the hills overlooking the Garigliano. During a reorganization on the night of 20-21 January, the 138 Brigade (46 Division) relieved the bulk of the 169 Brigade, and the 168 Brigade took over the Hill 413 area.

While the 5 and 56 Divisions were making their initial efforts, the 46 Division on the right of 10 Corps improved its positions by taking Vandra and Campo Fiore. Then the 128 Brigade made three unsuccessful efforts to cross the Garigliano east of Sant' Ambrogio. The 1/4 Hampshires failed in the first attempt southeast of the village at 2100, 19 January. Assault boats reached mid-stream only to be swept away by the strong current. A second attempt a short distance upstream failed when a cable broke after five men were across. The 2 Hampshires succeeded in getting about 30 men over at the mouth of Peccia Creek; but since the swift current prevented the boats from returning the party became isolated and was eliminated by the enemy before noon. A dense fog seriously hampered the effort, and by 0430, 20 January, the assault battalions were moving back to their former positions. The failure of the effort was of critical importance, for the left flank of II Corps, crossing the Rapido to the north, would now be open.

Despite this failure the initial phases of Operation Panther had taken the Germans by surprise. Within twenty-four hours 10 Corps had 10 battalions across the river; but then the enemy reacted swiftly to reinforce the 94th Grenadier Division with regiments and battalions drawn chiefly from the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute, 29th Panzer Grenadier and 90th Panzer Grenadier Divisions. Strong reinforcements came to the Castelforte area, and other units appeared near Minturno. On 21-23 January these forces launched numerous counterattacks to stop our advance. The 56 Division threw back counterattacks on its arc from the

Garigliano to Hill 413 and Salvatito Hill. The Germans made a strong effort to drive a wedge between the 138 and 168 Brigades by attacking south from Castelforte, but the British reinforced the 8 Royal Fusiliers with three troops of the 40 Royal Marine Commando and the line held. Farther west Mt. Natale, held by the 15 Brigade, was seriously threatened by late evening of the 21st and was lost on the 22d, but the 1 Green Howards halted this threat to Minturno. Point 201 north of Tufo changed hands four times on the 22d and 23d, with the 2 Cameronians finally holding it. By nightfall on 23 January the enemy had lost heavily in these counterattacks and had recovered very little ground, mostly in the Minturno area. After a renewal of his counter effort on the 24th against Hill 413, he went on the defensive, content for the time being to hold Mt. Rotondo (Hill 342), the north slopes of Hill 413, and Castelforte.

These counterattacks temporarily stopped the 10 Corps threat to the right flank of the German line, but the swaying contest for Cassino to the north made further efforts by 10 Corps essential. On 23-27 January General McCreery regrouped his forces by committing the 46 Division east of Castelforte, thus shortening the front of the 56 Division to the Hill 413 area. The 23 Armoured Brigade with the 2/5 Leicesters (139 Brigade) remained as a screening force in the former 46 Division sector east of the Garigliano.

The offensive was then renewed on 27 January, the 46 Division aiming north at Mt. Juga and the 5 Division striking at Mt. Natale. Apart from the recapture of the latter point by the 17 Brigade on the 30th, the only significant gains were made by the 138 Brigade on the right, which drove through to Mt. Juga on the 29th and to Mt. Purgatorio on the 31st. An effort by the 16 DLI to cut behind the enemy defenses at Castelforte failed, as did also an attack on Hill 413 by the 56 Division on 29 January. On 2 February the 2 Special Service Brigade, composed of the 9, 10, and 43 Commandos withdrawn from Anzio on 24 January, struck in vain to take Mt. Faito.

By 8 February the 10 Corps bridgehead across the Garigliano had reached its limit. The outer defenses of the Gustav Line had been breached, and the 46 Division had captured about six square miles northeast of Castelforte. This area was the only one in which 10 Corps took all its original bridgehead objectives and went on to exploit to the north. When the 56 Division was summoned to rein-

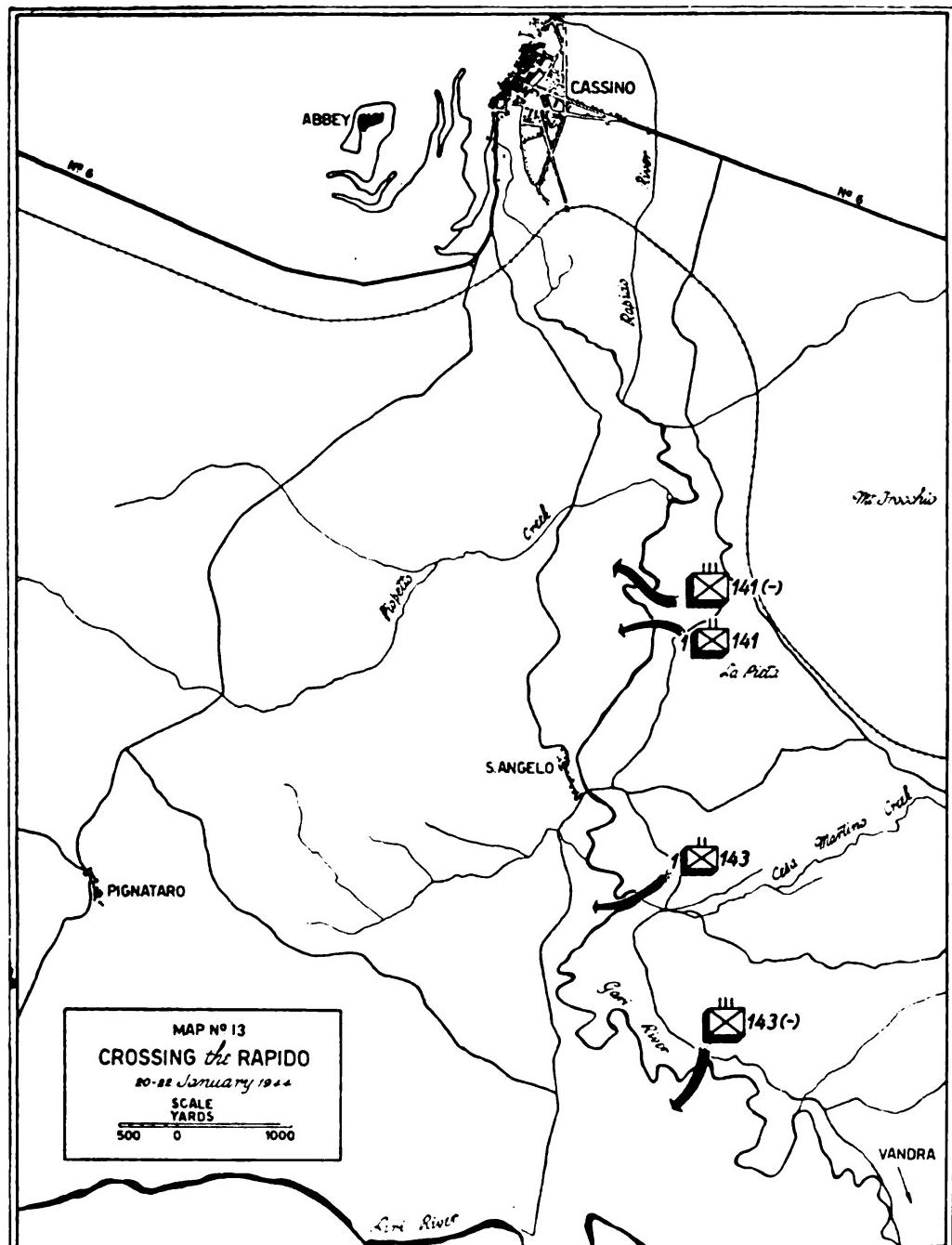
force the Anzio beachhead, the plan to drive up the Ausonia Valley was abandoned, and 10 Corps went on the defensive. In the principal action of 17-31 January it had captured 1,035 prisoners but had suffered 4,152 casualties. The bridgehead across the Garigliano was to prove invaluable in the May drive; immediately it was of little avail in breaking the Gustav Line.

### 3. THE 36TH DIVISION AT THE RAPIDO

20-22 January 1944

As outlined in orders issued by General Keyes of II Corps on 16 January, the 36th Division was to carry out the principal mission of II Corps in the drive toward Anzio. This it would do by establishing a bridgehead over the Rapido in the Sant' Angelo area as far west as Pignataro. (*See Map 13.*) Combat Command B of the 1st Armored Division would then pass through and attack toward Aquino and Piedimonte, screened on the left by the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. On the corps right flank the 34th Division was to demonstrate in conjunction with the attack of the 36th Division to hold the enemy on the Cassino front. The 34th Division orders governing this demonstration specifically prohibited any firing by infantry or artillery on the Abbey of Monte-cassino, an injunction imposed by higher headquarters. The 34th Division would also prepare plans to attack Cassino from the east or from the south through the Sant' Angelo bridgehead, or to pass through the 36th Division to continue the corps effort to the northwest. In brief, the plan called for a wide envelopment south of the Cassino position. The 45th Division was to prepare to pass through the bridgehead to reinforce Combat Command B, to capture Cassino from the southwest, or to capture Piedimonte and Aquino. One combat team of the 36th Division (the 142d) was to assemble near Mt. Trocchio, prepared for the same missions. This apparent duplication was a necessary precaution since the 45th Division was likely to be withdrawn for the Anzio operation.

The Rapido River south of Highway 6 is a narrow but swift stream. Varying in width from 25 to 50 feet, it flows between nearly vertical banks three to six feet high, which are generally covered with brush. In January the water was from nine to twelve feet deep. Sant' Angelo is built on a 40-foot bluff above the west bank about midway between Cassino and the Liri-Gari junction. This bluff slopes away to the north and south; there are no bluffs



on the east side of the river. The town therefore gave the Germans observation over much of the river and a large area to the east, as did also observation posts in the Abbey of Montecassino.

The enemy garrison had been identified by 20 January as follows: the 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment from Highway 6 to a short distance south of Sant' Angelo; the 115th Reconnaissance Battalion on its right, opposite the mouth of Cesa Martino Creek; and

the 1st Battalion, 129th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, in the pocket between the Gari and Liri rivers. The 211th Grenadier Regiment was southwest of Piedimonte in reserve. The German defenses were carefully prepared and liberally guarded by minefields on the east side of the Rapido. On the west bank, about 200-1000 yards inland, was a belt of dugouts, machine-gun positions, slit trenches and concrete bunkers behind hedgerows. All trees had been cut to clear fields of fire. Double-apron fences, booby-trapped with mines, lay in front of these positions. Machine-gun emplacements with interlocking fields of fire extended west in depth for hundreds of yards. Portable steel pillboxes, connected by communication trenches to well constructed bunkers, were impregnable to all but direct artillery hits. Sant' Angelo itself, reduced to rubble and shattered walls by demolitions, bombs, and artillery fire, contained strongly prepared machine-gun emplacements.

The strength of these defenses and of the position generally was well known, and the division and regimental plans were carefully prepared. The 141st Infantry, under Lt. Col. Aaron W. Wyatt, Jr., was to cross at the S bend north of Sant' Angelo with the 1st Battalion leading at 2000, 20 January. The three rifle companies were to cross abreast, seize an area 1100 to 1500 yards due west of the bend prior to daylight on the 21st, and then advance on Sant' Angelo. The first waves were to cross in boats while the engineers constructed five footbridges. The 3d Battalion was to follow behind the 1st Battalion over the same crossings an hour later and seize the high ground west of Sant' Angelo. The 2d Battalion in regimental reserve was to demonstrate south of the bend to simulate a crossing. South of Sant' Angelo the 143d Infantry under Colonel Martin had two crossing sites. One was about 1000 yards south of the town, just below the mouth of Cesa Martino Creek. At this site the 1st Battalion would go over with companies in column, advance northwest to seize the high ground southwest of Sant' Angelo, and be ready to assist the 141st Infantry in taking the town. The 3d Battalion, crossing 500 yards farther south in column of companies, was to turn southwest to seize the area in the pocket formed by the junction of the Liri and Gari rivers. Prepared to cross at either site, the 2d Battalion was in reserve to assist where most needed. One company in each of the assault battalions was to cross in boats operated by the 1st Battalion, 19th Engineer Combat Regiment; the rest of the infantry was to use footbridges, two of which were planned for each site. The 19th

Engineers and divisional engineers were later to construct vehicle bridges (8-ton and 40-ton) in each regimental zone.

Heavy support was scheduled, ranging from the antitank and cannon companies of the regiments concerned to a battalion of 8-inch howitzers, which would fire on Sant' Angelo throughout the attack until ordered to lift. Each regiment had one battalion of division artillery in direct support; the remaining two battalions were in general support, each with priority to one of the regiments. An intense preparation of thirty minutes would be fired before H-hour (2000, 20 January), followed by concentrations to advance by call on phase lines ahead of the infantry. Firing one round per gun per minute for the period 1930-1945, the artillery would increase its rate to four rounds per gun per minute, or the maximum, during 1945-2000. The 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion and the 760th Tank Battalion, from positions north and south of Cesa Martino Creek, would support with direct fire on known targets; the 2d Chemical Battalion would smoke both crossings.

On the night of 19-20 January final preparations for the river crossings were made. Infantry patrols went out continuously to determine the strength and locations of enemy installations. Engineers and infantry reconnoitered crossing sites, and the former cleared lanes through the minefields to the river bank. These lanes had to be checked continually because German patrols would cross the river to lay more mines; there was therefore little assurance that a lane marked as free of mines was actually safe for troops. The 111th Engineer Battalion, reinforced by two companies of the 16th Armored Engineer Battalion, procured 100 wooden assault boats and 100 six-man pneumatic reconnaissance boats in addition to the 19 assault and 13 pneumatic boats normally carried. No footbridge equipment was available, but 50 sections of catwalk were obtained. Floating footbridges could be improvised by laying sections on the pneumatic boats. This equipment was placed at designated spots where the infantry would carry it forward to the crossing sites.

On 20 January XII Support Command flew 124 sorties to support II Corps. Sixty-four P-40 sorties bombed strongpoints just west of the river north and south of Sant' Angelo; 36 A-20s and 24 P-40s hit roads and gun positions in the Cassino area. A heavier effort was impossible in view of the needs of 10 Corps and the air preparation for the Anzio landing. Corps artillery, consisting of 12 battalions of field artillery and 2 tank destroyer battalions in addi-

tion to the organic artillery of the 34th and 36th Divisions, continued a systematic pounding of defenses and gun positions.

With the 1st Battalion in the lead the 141st Infantry moved out from assembly areas before 1800, 20 January. On reaching the dumps the infantry discovered that enemy fire had destroyed several boats. White flares went up from the enemy positions at 1900, indicating that the assault had failed to achieve surprise. Company C left the dump in column of boat teams at 1905, followed by Companies A and B at 1930. Enemy mortar and artillery fire fell constantly among the troops during the approach to the river bank; in addition, the Germans shelled crossroads and positions between Mt. Trocchio and San Vittore and placed large concentrations of Nebelwerfer shells on our assembly areas. Company B suffered more than 30 casualties, including the company commander. The cleared lanes through minefields were difficult to find because the white tape had been lost or destroyed. Mines wounded many men and destroyed the pneumatic boats. Poor visibility caused a delay in reaching the crossing points and caused guides to become separated from their units. Colonel Wyatt, knowing that the assault companies would not reach the river by 2000, ordered the direct and special support artillery to continue firing on the targets covered by the original preparation.

A few boatloads of men from Companies A and B were across by 2100 and were clearing opposition on the west bank, but only a few men of Company C succeeded in getting over. Throughout the night the effort continued. German machine guns covered the area; hostile artillery, mortars, and Nebelwerfers fired in steady cadence; machine-pistol and small-arms fire caused many casualties and destroyed boats. The engineers attempted to install footbridges under great difficulties. One was defective, one was destroyed by mines, and artillery fire knocked out two more. From remnants of the four, one bridge was finally installed at 0400, and nearly all of Companies A and B rushed across. None of the 3d Battalion reached the west bank. By morning of the 21st there was no communication with the elements fighting west of the river, and only by the firing was it possible to determine that some progress was being made. At 0515 Brig. Gen. William H. Wilbur, Assistant Division Commander, ordered all elements still east of the river to withdraw to their assembly areas before daybreak; those west of the river were to dig in.

The 143d Infantry south of Sant' Angelo had somewhat better

success initially. In spite of the heavy fog and darkness the engineer guides led the infantry through the minefields and reached the north crossing site at 2000. Three platoons of Company C were over before enemy fire could destroy the boats; heavy fire at the crossing site, however, caused many casualties in Companies B and C. Colonel Martin went to the crossing site and organized a carrying party from Company B to bring more boats from the dump. Two footbridges were installed by 0500, and the 1st Battalion completed its crossing. One bridge was soon destroyed and the other was badly damaged. By 0700 the infantry on the west side had been forced into a pocket with the river to their backs. Enemy tanks or self-propelled guns in hull-down positions, mortars, small arms, and machine-guns were taking a heavy toll. Major David M. Frazier, the battalion commander, requested permission to withdraw; then before General Walker's order to remain reached him, Major Frazier decided that his men faced certain annihilation and ordered the companies to fall back. By 1000 the remnants of the battalion had returned to the east bank.

None of the 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, succeeded in getting over at the south crossing site. Engineers leading the boat group became lost in the dense fog and strayed into a minefield where the rubber boats were destroyed. Both infantry and engineers were badly disorganized. By the time Major Louis H. Ressijac, battalion commander, could restore order and bring up footbridges, enemy artillery again prevented a successful effort. Before daybreak the assault companies were back in their original positions.

General Keyes conferred with General Walker of the 36th Division at 1000, 21 January, and ordered the attack to be resumed at once. General Walker set the hour at 1400, but it was 1600 before either regiment could renew the assault. In the meantime the enemy had brought up reinforcements from the rear; demonstrations by the 34th Division north of Cassino apparently prevented any shifting of German troops from this sector. The 211th Grenadier Regiment moved into the line between Highway 6 and Pioppeto Creek; the 3d Battalion, 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, went in south of Sant' Angelo; and the 115th Reconnaissance Battalion sideslipped into the Liri-Gari pocket. When the 143d Infantry jumped off at 1600, the enemy was stronger than he had been the day before.

Under cover of smoke the 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, ferried the three rifle companies across in rubber boats by 1830. A foot-

bridge was then constructed, and the rest of the battalion crossed. With Company I on the right, Company K on the left, and Company L following to the left rear, the infantry struggled on toward their objectives. German machine guns protected by wire delivered low grazing fire that wounded or killed many men as they crawled forward. The 2d Battalion, ordered to follow the 3d Battalion, sent Companies E and F over shortly after midnight, leaving Company G to guard the rear at the footbridge. During the morning of the 22d the two battalions advanced more than 500 yards, but intense enemy fire and heavy casualties made their positions untenable.

The 1st Battalion had even less success on the 21st. Starting at 1600, Companies A and B were over by 1835, but Company C was unable to follow because of heavy fire. Some of the infantry advanced about 200 yards. Major Frazier crossed with Company B and directed operations until he was wounded by mortar fire early on the 22d. When Lt. Col. Michael A. Meath relieved him at 0500, the situation was hopeless. Companies A, B, and C had lost their commanders; the footbridge and all boats were destroyed; and most of the infantry had been driven back to the east side of the river. The open, flat terrain offered no protection from artillery and Nebelwerfer fire, so Colonel Martin ordered a withdrawal to higher ground where the battalion was to reorganize and await instructions. By 1240 all three battalions had been driven back to the east side of the river, except for a few isolated groups still in enemy territory. The members of these elements were killed or captured while the regiment, its efficiency seriously impaired, organized defensive positions near its former assembly areas.

To the north strenuous efforts had been made on the 21st to reinforce the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, elements of which had penetrated enemy defenses as far as 1000 yards west of the river. Because of difficulties in moving boats and bringing equipment forward, the attack was not resumed north of Sant' Angelo until 2100. A small part of Company F survived the swift current and enemy fire, but not until 0200, 22 January, did the infantry eliminate enemy riflemen and machine guns that had been firing directly on the crossings. Two footbridges were then put in by the engineers. By 0400 most of the assault troops were over, followed shortly by Companies H and M. The 3d Battalion, 141st Infantry, had a footbridge in operation south of the S bend, and by dawn most of the infantry had filed across.

Visibility was limited by fog to less than 50 yards after dawn but increased to about 800 yards early in the afternoon. Smoke pots were used liberally to screen the crossings, but enemy fire all along the stream was heavy since automatic weapons had been zeroed in on final protective lines. When the engineers attempted to work on the Bailey bridge, artillery and mortar fire prevented significant progress. Telephone communications between the regimental command post and assault troops were satisfactory until 1300, then the lines began to go out, and by 1600 all communication was cut off. All radio equipment was either destroyed or inoperative. Also by 1600 the bridges and boats were destroyed. The infantry on the west side were therefore completely isolated; resupply, evacuation, and communication were impossible.

The troops fought tenaciously under these insurmountable handicaps. Major Milton J. Landry and Lt. Col. Edwin W. Richardson, commanding the 2d and 3d Battalions respectively, made every effort to reorganize and regroup to continue the attack, but all officers of both headquarters were killed or wounded by 1500. At about 1600 the enemy felt out our positions with a counterattack by approximately two companies which was repulsed with heavy casualties. By that time every company commander but one was killed or wounded. The enemy renewed the attack on the center and both flanks shortly after 1700. American fire was noticeably less in volume, indicating that ammunition was running low. Practically no American fire was heard after 2000, and thirty minutes later the fire was all from German weapons. Between 1800 and 1900 about 40 of our troops returned to the east bank. All the rest had been killed, wounded, or captured.

The attack was a costly failure. Total casualties for the 36th Division were 1,681, of whom 143 were killed, 663 wounded, and 875 reported missing.<sup>1</sup> Officers and men were well trained; plans were made carefully on the lower levels; supplies and equipment, with the possible exception of boats and footbridges, were ample. Even this exception was not a decisive factor in the failure since many companies succeeded in crossing the river. Inability to follow through with strong reinforcements and supplies, lack of visibility for more effective artillery fire on enemy counterattacks, and disruption of communications by hostile fire were all contributing factors. Even more important as a reason for the failure were the enemy's extremely strong and expertly defended fortifications west of the river. If the 46 Division had been able to

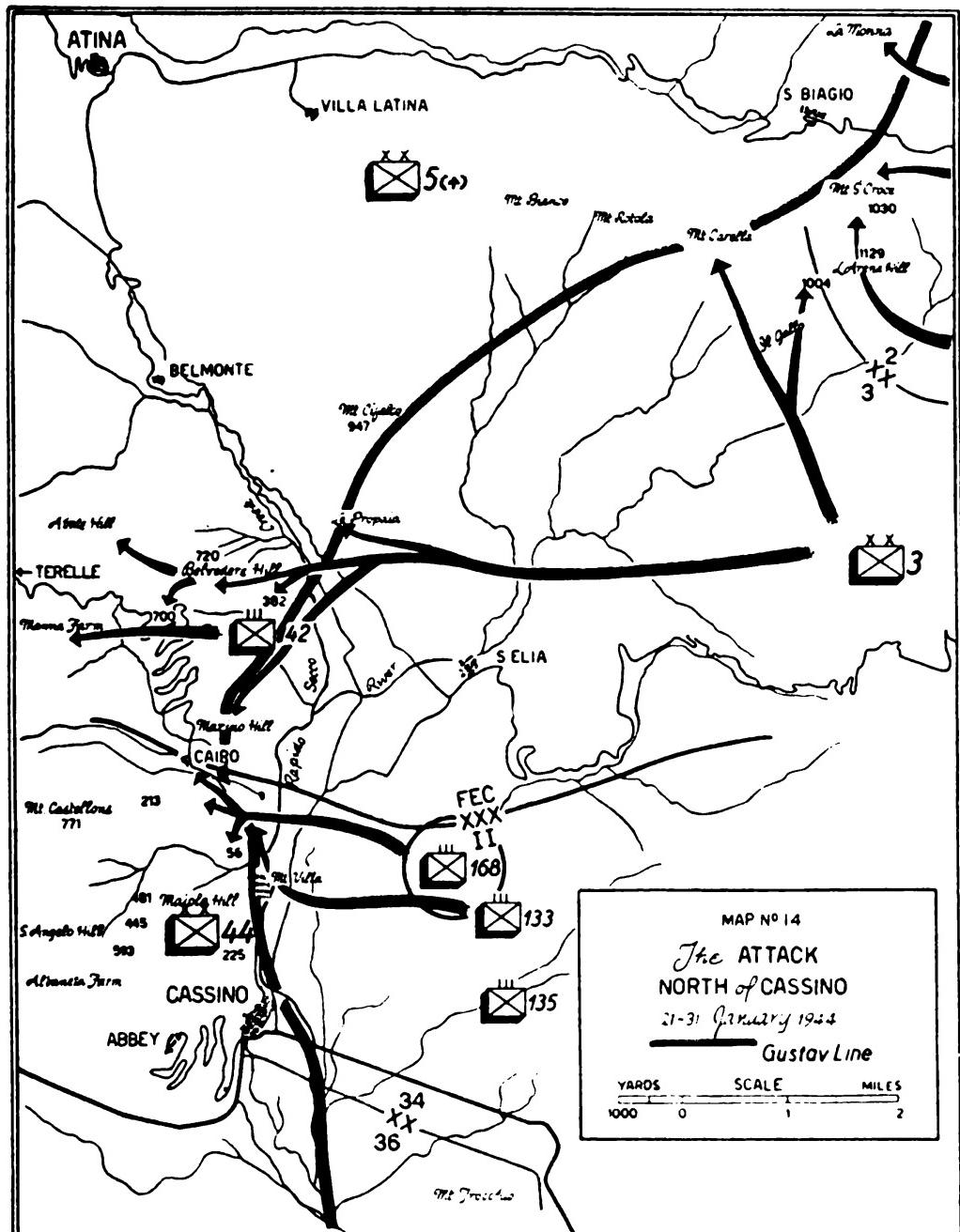
cross the Garigliano, pressure might perhaps have been exerted on these defenses from the south; but that effort had been beaten back on 19-20 January.

Maximum use of the II Corps artillery was impossible both preceding and during the attack. Counterbattery missions were difficult because the enemy's artillery, located in the Pignataro, Piedimonte, and Cassino area, was generally silent prior to H-hour. Heavy smoke, which interfered seriously with visual observation, required almost exclusive use of sound ranging. With our own artillery doing so much firing, this method of locating enemy gun positions could not yield satisfactory results. Under cover of smoke the enemy moved his artillery and Nebelwerfer positions. The latter operated effectively with complete freedom of movement, inasmuch as their flashes were concealed by smoke and sound microphones cannot detect the discharge of rockets. Our artillery was not able to assist the infantry when enemy counterattacks were forming. Since smoke covered the bridgehead and communications were nonexistent, infantry locations were unknown. During 20-24 January, nevertheless, II Corps artillery fired 112,303 rounds, most of it in support of the Rapido attack.

#### 4. THE NORTH FLANK OF THE GUSTAV LINE

21-31 January 1944

On 23 January the 36th Division assumed a defensive role while the 34th Division prepared to cross the Rapido north of Highway 6. The Anzio landing was under way, but the battles of 10 Corps and of the 36th Division thus far on the southern front gave little indication of an early junction with the beachhead. General Clark therefore directed that II Corps attempt to envelop Cassino from the north. The plans called for the 34th Division to cross the Rapido in the face of the 44th Grenadier Division and advance south, sending one column down the road into Cassino while other forces went through the mountains about Mt. Castellone to take the high ground dominating the town and debouch to the enemy's rear near Piedimonte. (*See Map 14.*) The 36th Division would carry out a demonstration to simulate a renewal of its crossing efforts and prepare to force the Rapido north of Sant' Angelo with one regimental combat team to establish a bridgehead for the passage of armor. The FEC, which had been battling on 21-23 January to take Mt. Santa Croce and push toward Atina, was



directed to turn southwest toward Terelle and Piedimonte. This shift would throw the weight of the FEC to its extreme left and might weaken the Cassino defenses by developing a threat to the enemy lines of supply and communication.

In contrast with the Rapido attack this new plan, which went back to the plans laid down in mid-November, called for envelopment of Cassino from the north rather than from the south; in neither scheme was the main weight directed against Cassino itself.

Only minor air support could be provided, for the Anzio beachhead required nearly the full efforts of XII Air Support Command; bad weather further curtailed operations. Artillery support, however, could be counted on, and II Corps artillery actually fired 164,203 rounds in the period 24-31 January. Two 240mm howitzers made their first appearance on the Italian front on 30 January and proved to be very accurate weapons for long-range destructive firing.

The enemy defensive positions before the 34th Division were similar to those guarding the Rapido River line south of Cassino, with the additional advantage of barren, rough, and steep mountains overlooking all approaches to the Rapido. A dam on the river, a little over a mile southwest of Sant' Elia, had been blown by the enemy to divert the stream. The entire plain, already soggy from heavy rains, was thus turned into a quagmire impassable for armor except by the construction of corduroy roads. Many irrigation and drainage ditches, extensive minefields on each side of the river, and barbed wire added greatly to the infantry's difficulties. Just north of Cassino the road to Cairo village follows the west bank of the Rapido and the edge of the mountains to the Italian military barracks at the hamlet of Mt. Villa. Here it turns northwest past Hill 56 (the Pimple) and Hill 213. The latter dominates the hamlet of Cairo. West of the barracks lie the steep, ravine-scarred slopes of Majola Hill (481 meters), which sends a long ridge south to Cassino. West and southwest of this ridge are mountains, hills, and ravines in tangled profusion.

Once across the Rapido, our troops would face a line of pillboxes, dugouts, and reinforced stone houses along the base of the mountains from Hill 213 to Cassino. From these positions the enemy had fields of fire which completely covered the river flats. All trees and brush west of the river north of Mt. Villa hamlet had been cut to provide clear fields of fire; stumps three feet high were left as minor tank obstacles. Poorly constructed barbed-wire entanglements extended through the minefields for 300 to 400 yards west of the river. Although this sector proved to be the weakest part of the Gustav Line, our troops suffered heavy casualties before they finally broke through the outer defenses after eight days of combat.

The attack order of General Ryder called for the 133d Infantry on the right under Colonel Marshall to take Hills 56 and 213, the barracks area, and the road to Cassino south of the barracks. The

168th Infantry under Col. Mark M. Boatner would be ready to pass through the 133d Infantry to seize the division objectives of Mt. Castellone, Sant' Angelo Hill, and Albaneta Farm. The 135th Infantry under Colonel Ward on the left would be ready to attack Cassino from the north. While five battalions of artillery laid down their thirty-minute concentration on the night of 24 January, all three battalions of the 133d Infantry moved forward from the assembly area to secure the initial bridgehead. At 2150, ten minutes before the jump-off from the line of departure, six colored flares went up from the enemy's lines; as in the case of the 36th Division attack at Sant' Angelo surprise could not be expected.

Except for the 100th Battalion, which was thirty minutes late in crossing the line of departure, the assault troops attacked on schedule. None of the battalions made much progress during the night. The 1st Battalion on the right was held up by a minefield 200 yards west of the line of departure; the 3d Battalion in the center got a few men up to the river but could not force a crossing against heavy fire from the barracks; the 100th Battalion on the left reached the river. The 756th Tank Battalion attempted to cross the river to clear lanes through the minefields for the 1st Battalion, but the tanks could not ford the stream.

In attacks on the morning of the 25th the 100th Battalion got elements across the river, then was stopped by barbed wire covered by machine guns. On the north flank the 1st Battalion cleared a lane through the minefield and had elements west of the Rapido by 1330. Two hours later the 3d Battalion established a small bridgehead across the river. Shortly after midnight on the 25th all three battalions had succeeded in their crossing attempt and were reorganizing on the west bank. Exploitation of the gains on the 26th was limited by the stiff enemy opposition. The 100th Battalion was held in place; the 1st Battalion and then the 1st and 3d Battalions together reached the base of Hill 213 but could not consolidate their hold. At nightfall they were back on the west bank in defensive positions. The 1st Battalion, 135th Infantry, crossed the river with one company just north of Cassino at 0330, 26 January, and reached the edge of the town, where flooded ditches, wire, mines, and machine-gun fire put an end to the advance. The battalion commander recalled the company. An attack launched after daybreak by the battalion in conjunction with the 100th Battalion against Point 225, midway between Cassino and the barracks, failed. No armor could get over to assist either

regiment. Six tanks were stuck on the most likely route and had to wait for extensive engineer work to improve the crossing.

Despite more than 300 casualties, the 133d Infantry had a small bridgehead across the Rapido by nightfall on 26 January, and II Corps was quick to order continuation of the attack. An hour's artillery preparation was scheduled, 0630-0730, 27 January; then the 168th Infantry would pass through the 133d Infantry and make the main effort, assisted by the 756th Tank Battalion, which would precede the infantry to break down wire, overrun anti-personnel mines, and destroy enemy strongpoints. Success or failure in getting tanks across the Rapido would have a great bearing on the entire operation. With roads narrow and deep in mud, herculean efforts would be required to enable the 756th Tank Battalion to execute its mission. Company B was to lead the attack, supported by fire from Company C, which would follow.

Divisional artillery fired 5,460 rounds in the preparation and a rolling barrage preceded the attack. At 0730 the tanks started along the trail to the Rapido which leaves the Sant' Elia road about a mile north of Mt. Villa hamlet. Some of the tanks slipped off the edge of the narrow, flooded route, but before 0830 two had crossed successfully. Two more of Company B's tanks were over by 0915, but tanks of Company C stuck in the mud and blocked the route. Engineers then began to construct a corduroy route just south of the trail, while the work of clearing the tanks went on. Of the four tanks west of the river, all were out of action by 1300. Two were knocked out by enemy rocket grenades, one suffered a broken track when it hit a mine, and the fourth stuck near the crossing when it returned for more ammunition. Yet the tanks had succeeded in clearing lanes for the infantry to expand their bridgehead.

The 168th Infantry crossed on the tank route with the 1st Battalion on the left and the 3d Battalion on the right. Throughout the day the four companies west of the Rapido were subjected to heavy enemy fire, but by nightfall the leading elements were near the base of Hills 56 and 213 after suffering heavy casualties. Company C crossed after dark, passed through Companies A and B at 2100, and before dawn on the 28th had a few men on Hill 213. The company commander believed that the position could not be held during daylight so he moved the company back across the river. Companies A and B also started back when this withdrawal was observed, but the battalion commander stopped the troops

at the east bank and organized defensive positions. The 3d Battalion held on west of the river until dark of the 27th. Then Companies I and K withdrew, turned north along the river, and crossed 500 yards upstream from the tank route. A French guide led the troops through the minefields, and by dawn on 28 January two platoons were dug in midway between Cairo village and the Rapido. The infantry held in position during the day while the engineers worked on tank routes.

A combat team was formed to renew the attack on 29 January. One company and one platoon of the 760th Tank Battalion were added with the 175th Field Artillery Battalion in direct support. All of the corps engineers (235th Engineer Combat Battalion and 1108th Engineer Combat Group) were in support. The 2d Battalion, 168th Infantry, was to make the main effort toward the saddle between Hills 56 and 213. One company of tanks was to precede the infantry. On the left the 1st Battalion and a platoon of tanks were to take Hill 56 while the 3d Battalion with another platoon of tanks would advance to the north of Hill 213.

This plan succeeded. The engineers had found an alternate tank route along the corps boundary and had two other routes ready. By 0700, 29 January, however, only seven tanks were across. Two burned out when hit by self-propelled guns; two more ran out of ammunition. Company E, spearheading the infantry assault, made good progress in the morning but had to wait for tanks to destroy the strongpoints. The 756th Tank Battalion played a decisive role in forcing the issue when 23 tanks, coming down the dry river bed from the corps boundary, turned west at about 1600. The infantry then struck swiftly. By dark all three battalions were at the base of Hills 56 and 213; before dawn on the next day the 2d and 3d Battalions captured Hill 213, and the 1st Battalion took Hill 56. Many of the enemy were trapped in dugouts and pillboxes, and mopping up continued until noon. The hills were then consolidated sufficiently to enable the 168th Infantry to repel strong counterattacks in the afternoon and on the 31st. On the morning of the 31st a platoon of Company K, aided by a platoon of tanks, captured Cairo village and with it the headquarters of the 131st Grenadier Regiment.

While the 34th Division had been establishing its bridgehead across the Rapido, the FEC had been driving at the high ground between Terelle and the Rapido River to secure the north flank

of the intended envelopment of Cassino. General Juin completed the necessary reorganization on 24 January. At dawn on the 25th the 3d Algerian Division under General de Monsabert began the assault on Le Propaia, by-passing the enemy's strong positions on Mt. Cifalco. The Germans, surprised by this maneuver, lost Le Propaia to the 4th Tunisian Infantry (*4e Régiment de Tirailleurs Tunisiens*), which went on to cross Secco Creek and reach the foot of Belvedere Hill by early afternoon. Although an enemy counter-attack recovered part of Le Propaia on the 25th, the 4th Tunisian Infantry captured Belvedere Hill and Abate Hill on the 26th while the 3d Algerian Infantry (*3e Régiment de Tirailleurs Algériens*) threw back the enemy on Le Propaia. This audacious assault, executed boldly, again took the enemy by surprise. The Germans counterattacked fiercely on the 27th and recaptured Abate Hill and Hill 700 to the southeast; but the French held firmly on Belvedere Hill.

The French, having by-passed Mt. Cifalco, had partly uncovered their right and did not have adequate strength to exploit their brilliant penetration into the hills north of Cairo. By Army directive the 142d Regimental Combat Team was attached on 26 January to the 34th Division as a special task force under Brig. Gen. Frederick B. Butler for combined operations with the French, the Americans to move to Belvedere Hill and attack for Manna Farm and Mt. Castellone while the French pushed north of the Terelle road on Abate Hill. Detailed plans were made, but the move of the 142d Infantry on its long, circuitous route via Sant' Elia was not completed until the night of 30-31 January. The 2d Battalion, which came up to Belvedere Hill early on the 29th, attacked the next day toward Manna Farm and took it on the 31st. The French beat off severe counterattacks down the valley between Belvedere Hill and Le Propaia on the 28th and retook Abate Hill by the end of the month.

## 5. THE 34TH DIVISION BATTLES FOR CASSINO

1-14 February 1944

By 31 January the over-all position of Fifth Army was not entirely satisfactory. The Anzio beachhead was being contained by an ever-increasing number of enemy troops; the 10 Corps drive across the Garigliano was practically stopped; and the 36th Division had suffered very heavy casualties in an unsuccessful at-

tempt to cross the Rapido south of Cassino. Only north of the town was the picture brighter. Here the 34th Division had made a slight but important breach in the Gustav Line, and the FEC, with only two divisions to man a long front, had nevertheless consolidated a hold in the mountains adjoining the II Corps zone. These successes made it possible to continue the attack into the hills above Cassino with the main objective of driving to Piedimonte and taking Cassino, thus opening the Liri Valley to our armor.

The mountainous district extending two miles west and three miles north of Cassino was to be the scene of most of the fighting. This small area of six square miles held the enemy's forces protecting Cassino and the northern entrance to the Liri Valley. (*See Map 15.*) Mt. Castellone (771 meters) and Sant' Angelo Hill (575 meters) marked the western limits of the Cassino defenses. The greatest enemy strength lay south of Majola Hill near the center of the district. Monastery Hill and more than a dozen hills and knobs close to it dominated the town. Hill 593, about one-half mile to the northwest, was the outer bastion of Monastery Hill in that direction. This point was itself protected by Sant' Angelo Hill and Majola Hill. The ridge running from Hangman's Hill (435 meters) on Monastery Hill northeast to the northern edge of Cassino had three important points, Hill 236, Hill 165, and Castle Hill (193 meters) on the western outskirts of the town.

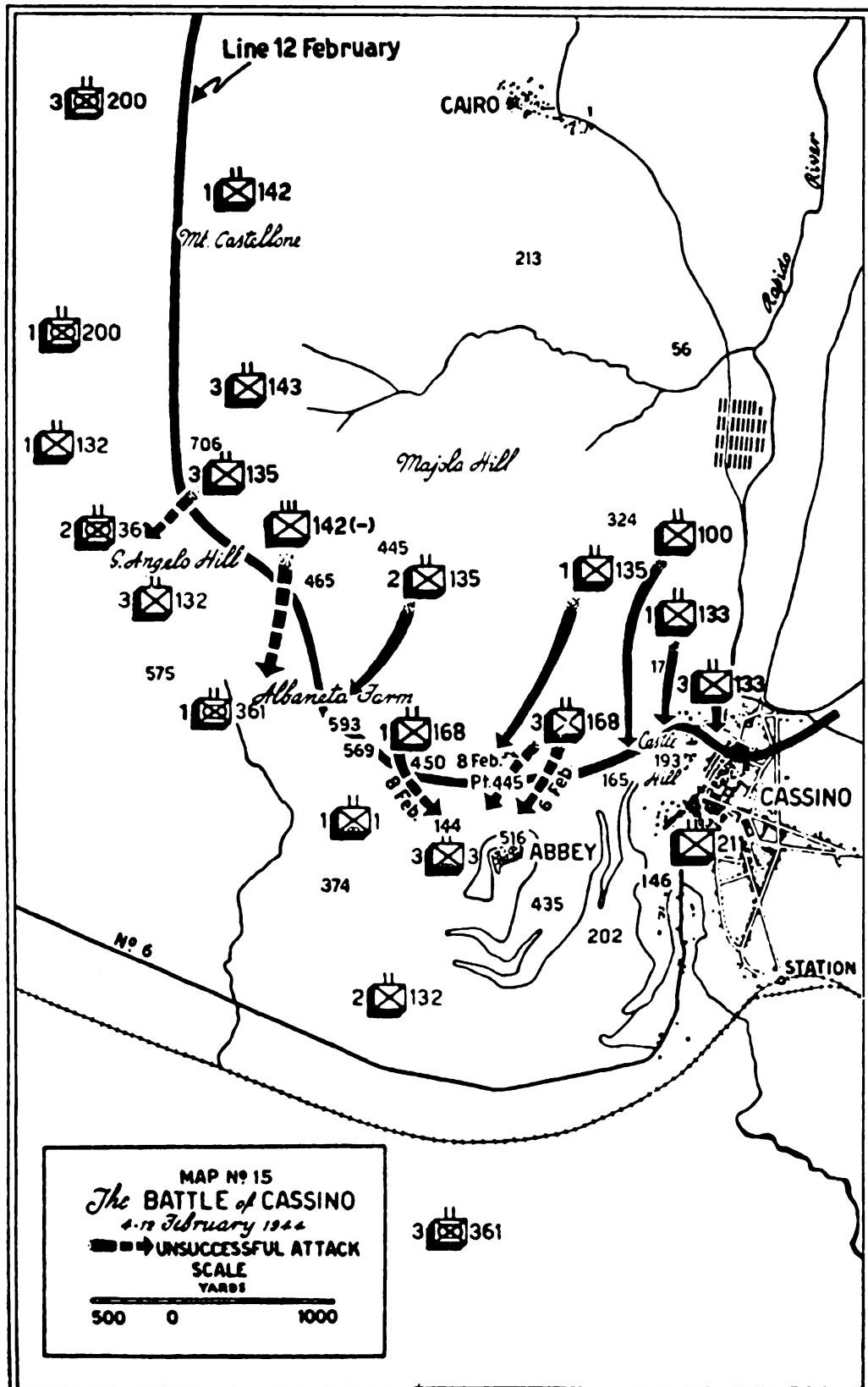
In this area there is practically no timber. Some slopes are terraced; cultivated fields occupy several of the narrow valleys; and deep ravines are numerous. The few trails winding among the mountains could easily be covered by machine-gun fire. All positions were mutually supporting, protected by minefields, and strongly fortified. This terrain and the enemy's use of it gave him an all but impregnable fortress. Nevertheless, Fifth Army had to attack to force its way into the Liri Valley, and the attack had to be made by troops already near the point of exhaustion after several weeks of hard fighting. On the enemy side, the 211th Grenadier Regiment, reinforced by the 132d Grenadier Regiment, was responsible for Cassino itself. The 134th and 131st Grenadier Regiments, the 191st Grenadier Regiment, and the 8th Panzer Grenadier Regiment held the rest of the sector to Terelle, beyond which point lay the 5th Mountain Division.

The tactical situation at the close of 31 January caused General Ryder to order the 135th Infantry to attack Mt. Castellone and Majola Hill, while the 142d Infantry came up from the Belvedere

bridgehead to take over Mt. Castellone. The 168th Infantry was to hold in place on Hills 56 and 213, support the 135th Infantry with fire, and protect the right flank. The 133d Infantry would prepare to attack south from the barracks. Tank support for the division would be furnished by the 753d, 756th, and 760th Tank Battalions.

At H-hour, 0630, 1 February, two battalions of the 135th Infantry jumped off and advanced swiftly, the 3d Battalion on the right to the crest of Mt. Castellone (771 meters) and the 2d Battalion on the left to the top of Majola Hill. A heavy fog enabled both battalions to come in on the enemy almost undetected, apart from some artillery fire on the 2d Battalion. The attack then continued toward Sant' Angelo Hill and the spur running on down to Monastery Hill. On the next day the 2d Battalion advanced south over Hill 445 and succeeded in getting halfway to Hill 593.<sup>2</sup> The 1st Battalion paralleled this advance and cleaned out resistance on Hill 324 during 2-3 February, thereby protecting the regiment's east flank, at the cost of severe casualties. Strong counterattacks against the 2d Battalion forced the commitment of the 3d Battalion, 168th Infantry, on its right; at the end of the action on the 3d the two battalions were one and one-half miles north of Highway 6. Prisoners of war captured in the area disclosed that Hill 593 was garrisoned by the 3d Battalion, 3d Parachute Regiment, which had been rushed into line from Ortona on the Adriatic coast. Advance to the right of this main thrust was limited on 1-3 February, for enemy counterattacks were severe all along the front from Manna Farm to Hill 706 on the southern end of Mt. Castellone. This point was taken by the 3d Battalion, 135th Infantry, on the 3d; on the previous day the 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, had moved up to garrison Mt. Castellone.

In the valley below, the 133d Infantry cleared out the barracks area north of Cassino on 31 January-2 February. Its rear now protected, the regiment advanced south against Cassino, the infantry of the 3d Battalion spread out to take the high ground commanding the road and two platoons of Company B, 756th Tank Battalion, advancing down the road and the Rapido River bed. The platoon of tanks in the stream bed was stopped about 600 yards north of the town by blocks and antitank fire; the armor moving along the road made slightly better progress until antitank guns, concealed by smoke, fired on our tanks. Then the tanks pulled back temporarily to a quarry west of the road behind Hill 56.



At 1725, 2 February, both infantry and tanks advanced again under smoke and fifteen minutes later were in the north end of the town of Cassino. Within an hour enemy infantry were attacking the tanks that had succeeded in penetrating the outskirts. As darkness increased, the tanks lost their effectiveness, and our troops withdrew about 1000 yards; the enemy had captured two tanks and damaged three.

The assault with tanks and infantry was resumed on the 3d. At 0600 Company C attacked with tank support toward the northeast corner of Cassino, only to be forced back. Plans were then made to attack with the 1st and 3d Battalions in the afternoon. After taking its first objective, Hill 175, the 3d Battalion came under fire from Castle Hill to the south, which had a nearly vertical cliff on its north side concealing machine guns and small strongpoints in caves and dugouts. In conjunction with this attack Company C, 760th Tank Battalion, moved down the road into the north edge of Cassino by 1645. One platoon of tanks with elements of Company I consolidated positions in a courtyard at the northwest corner of Cassino, using walls and corners of buildings for defilade; this hold, however, was very precarious so long as the enemy held Castle Hill rising immediately above it. The 1st Battalion penetrated the northeast edge of town and dug in.

The 34th Division made important gains in the first three days of the February drive. Approximately one-third of the critical area northeast of Cassino was in our hands, and both infantry and tanks had won a slight foothold in Cassino itself. Our troops were at close grips with the enemy's strongest defenses barring the way into the Liri Valley. Although losses had been heavy, there was reason to believe that our superiority in artillery and armor might enable the infantry to break through to Highway 6.

Three main drives in the next nine days, however, failed to produce the breakthrough, as the Germans committed the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division and then the 1st Parachute Division in the battle for Cassino. During 4-7 February the 34th Division made some gains against the stiffened opposition. In the hills above Cassino the 3d Battalion, 135th Infantry, reached Sant' Angelo Hill on the 4th, but an enemy counterattack threw the battalion back to Hill 706. In the center the 2d Battalion advanced to within 500 yards of Hill 593. The 1st Battalion on the left secured a precarious hold on Point 445. Fighting throughout the day can best be described as confused. Our own and the enemy's troops

were often only a few yards apart, exchanging hand grenades across stone walls. Close control was extremely difficult and often impossible. There was little progress on the 5th as the 34th Division regrouped. The 2d Battalion, 135th Infantry, was hard pressed in beating off counterattacks; a squad-sized platoon of the 1st Battalion fought its way to the walls of the Abbey and captured 14 prisoners from a cave on Monastery Hill before withdrawing. This daring foray represented the farthest advance of the 34th Division in the battle for Cassino.

During the night of 5-6 February the 1st and 3d Battalions, 168th Infantry, assembled on Point 445, while the 1st Battalion, 135th Infantry, concentrated toward the left flank to block enemy infiltration from Castle Hill. At dawn on 6 February Company L led the attack of the 168th Infantry against Monastery Hill. Working through the V-shaped gorge between Point 445 and their objective, our troops started up a path toward the Abbey and reached a point where the path became a defile covered by enemy machine guns on the Abbey walls and on Castle Hill to their left rear. Companies K and L were pinned down all day, then retired to Point 445 to relieve the 1st Battalion, 135th Infantry, which passed to temporary reserve. The 2d Battalion, 135th Infantry, had only slightly better success on the 6th. Jumping off at 0630, the advance elements gained a foothold on Hills 593 and 569, were driven off by a counterattack, and again recovered the north slopes of Hill 593. Furious counterattacks continued throughout the next day; but the battalion, greatly reduced in strength, held on grimly.

On 4 February the 133d Infantry and tanks of the 760th Tank Battalion consolidated the positions they had won in the north edge of Cassino. The 1st Battalion again penetrated the north-eastern corner but was driven out by six enemy tanks. The battalion then moved over to occupy Hill 175, thus permitting Company L to come up to support the rest of the 3d Battalion within Cassino. Artillery fire continued the effort to pulverize strongpoints. The 151st Field Artillery Battalion fired 4,568 rounds during the day in support of the 133d Infantry, but the 105mm howitzers were ineffective against the concrete-and-steel bunkers and heavy stone buildings. Eight-inch howitzers were called on to level these strongpoints. The 760th Tank Battalion emplaced a 57mm antitank gun north of Cassino to provide plunging fire; the assault gun platoon and the 105mm howitzers of the medium

tank companies moved to firing positions near Cairo village. One section of 3-inch tank destroyers advanced to the south end of the barracks. On 5 February the 1st Battalion began to advance south from Hill 175 to attack Castle Hill at the end of the ridge running northeast from Monastery Hill. Clearing out the draws and gullies on the way, the battalion reached its objective, but after dark a strong counterattack compelled it to fall back to Hill 175. The 3d Battalion repulsed a counterattack against its left flank and captured another block of houses.

By the 6th the 34th Division had reached the last enemy strongholds—Hill 593, Monastery Hill, Castle Hill, and Cassino—baring us from Highway 6. The question now was whether we could muster the strength to push on over the last ridge. At the end of January General Alexander had ordered the 2 New Zealand Division and the 4 Indian Division to be withdrawn from Eighth Army to serve as Army Group reserve to exploit through the Liri Valley. On 3 February these two divisions were formed into the New Zealand Corps and came under Fifth Army. General Clark then directed the 2 New Zealand Division to take over the sector south of Highway 6, a step accomplished by 0900, 6 February. Thus relieved, the 36th Division could provide the strength needed to continue the drive on Cassino; on the 5th it was directed to move around to the right of the 34th Division and be prepared to capture Piedimonte from the northeast. The 34th Division was to take the Cassino stronghold and thus pave the way for armor to enter the Liri Valley. The New Zealand Corps would be available to pass through to continue the attack. These plans were coordinated with an assault by 10 Corps south of the Liri River. During the night of 7-8 February 10 Corps was to attack on its right toward Mt. Faito, and a day later capture the mountains behind Castelforte. Success in these attacks would force the enemy to withdraw and open the Liri Valley, but the 10 Corps effort was not mounted in strength and did not reach its objectives.

When the 36th Division took over the Castellone-Manna Farm area on the 7th, II Corps was ready for the second drive of 8-10 February to cut Highway 6. The 34th Division plan of action called for an attack at 2200, 7 February, by the 135th Infantry to seize Albaneta Farm and thus protect the right flank of the 168th Infantry in its assault on Monastery Hill at 0600, 8 February. The 133d Infantry would continue the battle in Cassino. The 135th Infantry was fully occupied in beating back counterattacks

and could not muster the strength necessary for offensive action; H-hour was therefore set ahead to 0400 for the 168th Infantry to take advantage of darkness. The 2d Battalion, 135th Infantry, dropped back slightly from Hill 593, being relieved by elements of the 168th Infantry, and the 1st Battalion moved over to the right of the 2d Battalion in order to aid in defending the division right flank.

The 1st and 3d Battalions, 168th Infantry, jumped off at 0400, 8 February, in a concentric attack against Monastery Hill. Companies A and C on the right moved down the gorge to the east of Hill 593 and had reached a path at the base of Point 444 northwest of the Abbey when fire from both flanks caused the battalion to withdraw to more protected positions. Company K, working forward on the right of the 3d Battalion, was pinned down on the barren, forward slope of Point 445. After an hour's artillery preparation both battalions again attacked at 1530. The 1st Battalion again reached the base of Point 444 but could proceed no farther because of heavy casualties; Companies A and C had lost so many men that the remnants were combined into one company. Late in the afternoon an enemy counterattack gained ground on the northern slopes of Hill 593, but the 135th Infantry drove the enemy back after bitter fighting. Counterattacks continued through the 9th and 10th while elements of the 36th Division moved up to make a last effort against the mountain strongholds.

During the night of 7-8 February the 100th Battalion came forward to join in the attack on Cassino. At 0645, 8 February, all three battalions of the 133d Infantry jumped off under cover of smoke and supported by tanks. The 100th Battalion on the right advanced quickly from Hill 175 to the vicinity of Point 165, some 400 yards southwest of Castle Hill on the ridge running to Monastery Hill, and was ordered to hold there as flank protection. In the center the 1st Battalion reached the northwest slope of Castle Hill. The 3d Battalion in Cassino gained about 200 yards with the aid of tanks and 8-inch howitzers. Thereafter progress was painfully slow with bitter fighting for each shattered house and rubble heap.

Though anxious for an early decision at Cassino, General Alexander was reluctant to commit the New Zealand Corps in an active role unless II Corps failed to defeat the enemy. General Keyes therefore ordered a third attack by his weary troops to begin on 11 February. The 36th Division was to capture Albaneta Farm,

Hill 593, and Hill 374 to its south; the 34th Division would again strike at Monastery Hill and Cassino. The FEC was expected to attack toward Terelle with the aid of the 142d Infantry, but this part of the plan was dropped. If II Corps should succeed in these efforts, the New Zealand Corps would send elements of the 4 Indian Division through the mountains to exploit toward Piedimonte; if II Corps failed, the same division would continue the drive on Monastery Hill.

Neither the 141st Infantry nor the 142d Infantry succeeded in executing its mission. On the right the 142d Infantry advanced to the east and west ends of the small, bowl-shaped plateau of Albaneta Farm and attempted to neutralize enemy strongpoints by fire. Colonel Lynch believed that Albaneta Farm could not be held unless Hill 575 to the northwest were also captured; his troops therefore did not occupy the area, enemy fire from which was still sufficiently heavy to cause considerable casualties among the 141st Infantry in its attack against Hill 593. By noon on the 11th the infantry had registered very little progress; during the afternoon the enemy counterattacked twice but was thrown back with large losses. The 141st Infantry used more than 1,500 hand grenades in repelling these thrusts by elements of the 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment. Our own losses were so heavy that the 1st and 3d Battalions together could muster only 22 officers and 160 men. Colonel Wyatt combined the remnants into one unit.

On the 12th the 36th Division passed over to the defensive. The 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, held Mt. Castellone; the 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, garrisoned Hill 706; and the 2d Battalion, 141st Infantry, defended from Hill 706 to Point 465. An unusually persistent counterattack developed at about 0630 along the 36th Division line, following one of the heaviest barrages ever fired by German artillery in Italy. The situation was critical until noon, but by that time the enemy gave up, having lost heavily; the 1st Battalion, 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, left about 150 dead on the slopes of Mt. Castellone. On 14 February the infantry regiments of the 36th Division, which had never recovered from the Rapido slaughter, averaged less than twenty-five percent of their effective combat strength.

The 168th Infantry was unable to gain ground in its attack toward Monastery Hill on 11 February. A violent rain and snow-storm raged in the mountains, reducing visibility to a few yards. The regiment's combat strength was so low that extra drivers,

clerks, and antitank personnel were formed into provisional units to provide reserves for the infantry companies. During 13-15 February the regiment was relieved by elements of the 4 Indian Division. In Cassino the 133d Infantry held the houses it had already captured while the New Zealand Corps completed plans to take over the battle from the utterly exhausted units of II Corps.

During the first two weeks of February II Corps had driven through the Gustav Line to the last defenses of the Cassino position and stood about a mile from Highway 6. But the victory, so near at hand, had not been reached. The closely packed fortifications of Cassino and Monastery Hill stood as one of the most formidable enemy strongholds yet encountered by Fifth Army troops. The extremely bitter fighting had reduced the combat efficiency of the 34th Division to a critical point, to say the least. The 36th Division, after its losses on 20-22 January, was more than 3,000 infantrymen understrength. Heavy losses had been suffered by the enemy, but his ability to rush reinforcements forward to meet our thrusts had so far been decisive.

## 6. THE NEW ZEALAND CORPS AT CASSINO

15 February-23 March 1944

The New Zealand Corps under Lt. Gen. Sir Bernard C. Freyberg was formed specifically for the Cassino battle from the 2 New Zealand Division under Maj. Gen. G. B. Parkinson, the 4 Indian Division under Maj. Gen. F. I. S. Tucker, and from 8 February the British 78 Infantry Division under Maj. Gen. C. F. Keightley. The latter unit was held up by deep snow on its Eighth Army front and did not arrive in the New Zealand Corps area until 17 February. II Corps artillery remained initially in support of the New Zealand Corps, and the 36th Division, it was agreed, would garrison Mt. Castellone until the attack by the New Zealand Corps had passed through. In addition to organic divisional artillery General Freyberg had three field and five medium regiments under his command.

On 11 February General Alexander directed through General Clark that the 4 Indian Division attack as quickly as possible to clear the high ground west of Cassino and that a bridgehead be established across the Rapido south of the town. While preparations were being made and delayed by the weather, General Frey-

berg decided that the Abbey of Montecassino must be destroyed. Enemy activity around the famous structure had been observed for some time. Ammunition dumps were dangerously close to the Abbey; observers used it constantly to direct artillery fire; snipers had fired from it; and gun emplacements were numerous around the building. The hallowed Benedictine monastery, thus far spared by Fifth Army, was definitely a military objective. In conjunction with the bombing, artillery serenades were to add to the destruction. The 4 Indian Division would then attack toward Monastery Hill, while the 2 New Zealand Division drove along the railroad bed to capture the Cassino station. This move required the construction of two Bailey bridges, one across a canal and the second over the walled channel of the Rapido River.

The weather proving good on the 15th, the first wave of 255 Allied bombers began to bomb the Abbey at about 0900 on that date. Flying Fortresses, Marauders, and Mitchells dropped 342 tons of bombs before noon and scored several direct hits. During the day 576 tons of bombs were dropped. German troops made repeated efforts to run from the Abbey to safer positions while others took refuge in tunnels and cellars. After each wave of bombers passed over, heavy artillery fired on the target. A special serenade of 314 rounds was laid down at 1030, consisting of 5 rounds each from ten 240mm howitzers and twenty-four 8-inch howitzers and 4 rounds each from twelve 4.5-inch guns and twenty-four 155mm guns. The Abbey was destroyed as a monument; its usefulness to the enemy was only impaired.

During the night of 15-16 February the 1 Royal Sussex jumped off on a preliminary, unsuccessful attack to clear Hill 593. In another assault on the night of 17-18 February the battalion took the crest but was driven off after midnight in fierce hand-to-hand fighting; the battalion lost 12 officers and 130 men in casualties. Two companies of the 4/6 Rajputana Rifles (11 Infantry Brigade) moved up to support the 1 Royal Sussex, and the 4/16 Punjabs occupied the high ground between Points 450 and 445. During the early morning of the 18th the 4/16 Rajputana Rifles made the third attack against Hill 593. By 0915 these troops, backed by the 1 Royal Sussex, were secure on part of the hill and held out against four counterattacks. At 0200 the 1/2 Gurkha Rifles (7 Infantry Brigade) and the 1/9 Gurkha Rifles (5 Infantry Brigade) passed through Point 444 to assault Monastery Hill. The two battalions made very little progress.

While these attacks were under way, the 2 New Zealand Division was attempting to capture the Cassino station and a road junction beyond. At 2130, 17 February, the 5 New Zealand Brigade attacked. The enemy, driven from the station, counterattacked the 28 New Zealand (Maori) Battalion and recovered the key point by mid-afternoon on the 18th; the 24 New Zealand Battalion held the two Bailey bridges installed the previous night. Air support scheduled for the Cassino attack was hastily shifted on the 17th to Anzio, where the enemy's all-out drive was threatening to break our lines; for the next two weeks the primary mission of the air force remained support of the Anzio garrison. The first attack of the New Zealand Corps, marked by the bombing of the Abbey, thus ended with scant gains, including Hill 593. The commitment of two fresh divisions in the Cassino area had not increased the prospect of a junction between the main force of Fifth Army and the Anzio beachhead.

The rest of February and early March saw a lull in the fighting about Cassino, during which both sides regrouped. The 133d Infantry and elements of the 756th Tank Battalion, which had been holding in the north end of the town, were relieved by the 2 New Zealand Division on 22 February. By the 28th the 2d Battalion, 351st Infantry (88th Division), and the FEC, which had been forced by the length of its front to remain on the defensive, relieved the 36th Division on Mt. Castellone. The month of February ended with only one American battalion in line on the southern front. II Corps was in reserve for the most part, and VI Corps was at Anzio. Under Fifth Army the FEC with Italian attachments held the north sector; the New Zealand Corps was in the center; and 10 Corps lay on the south.

The enemy also readjusted his forces so as to reassemble divisions and give needed rest to tired troops. Cassino and the surrounding hills to Mt. Cairo were now held by the 1st Parachute Division, the best enemy unit in Italy. The 3d Parachute Regiment garrisoned Cassino, the 1st Battalion on Monastery Hill and the ridge running down to Castle Hill, and the 2d Battalion in the town with three companies of the 3d Battalion attached. The 4th Parachute Regiment lay in the hills north and west of Cassino; the 1st Parachute Regiment was on the south slope of Mt. Cairo.

The New Zealand Corps, however, was not yet ready to give up its attempt to take Cassino and made fresh plans during the lull.

Since it had proved difficult to take Monastery Hill from the north-west, General Freyberg decided to assault the point from Cassino, a decision that required the capture of the town and the ridge Castle Hill-Point 165-Point 202-Hangman's Hill. Cassino in turn could be attacked from the east or from the north. Strong defenses, the Rapido River, ground conditions, road limitations, and dominating enemy observation from Monastery Hill were all unfavorable factors which combined to make the eastern approach undesirable. An attack from the north, as originally attempted by II Corps, was favored because the infantry already held the northern part of the town and an all-out air attack might neutralize enemy defenses to permit a successful assault with minimum losses. Approaches could be developed with less enemy interference than might be experienced if the major effort were made from the east. The attack on Monastery Hill from the north would be facilitated by moving along the ridge from Castle Hill to Hangman's Hill, a natural approach to the Abbey itself.

The plans as issued on 21 February directed an attack in accordance with these considerations. First the 4 Indian Division was to take Point 445 and bring Castle Hill and the eastern slopes of Monastery Hill under fire. Then would come the air bombardment of Cassino and secondary targets, followed by the attack of the 2 New Zealand Division to gain Cassino and Castle Hill and to form a bridgehead over the Rapido along Highway 6. The 4 Indian Division was to cover the assault on Castle Hill, take it over after its capture, go on to assault Monastery Hill, and cut Highway 6. Since the air force was to play such an important part in the operation, it was to set D-day and H-hour. The proper use of tanks in support of the infantry required three successive days without rain, and the air program called for good visibility.

No other attack in the experience of Fifth Army received the massive, intensive air and artillery preparation that was arranged to precede the New Zealand Corps assault at Cassino. Most of the extensive air program was carried out on 15 March as planned. Five hundred and three medium and heavy bombers dropped 1,184 tons on and around Cassino during the period 0830-1200. Cloud cover in the afternoon kept 120 B-17s and 140 B-24s from finding their targets to the rear of Cassino; but fighter-bombers were very successful in their afternoon sorties. Between 1300 and 1500, 49 fighter-bombers dropped 18 tons on the Cassino railway station; from 1345 to 1630, 96 P-47s, A-36s, and P-40s hit the Colosseum

area south of Cassino with 44 tons; and between 1500 and 1700, 32 P-40s and A-36s bombed the forward slopes of Monastery Hill with 10 tons. Another 34 tons were dropped on miscellaneous targets by 66 A-20's and P-40s. Promptly at 1200 the terrific artillery concentrations by 890 pieces began, followed by a rolling barrage at 1240 fired by 144 25-pounders of the New Zealand Corps and creeping from end to end through Cassino. During the period 1200-2000, 195,969 rounds were fired, most of it by New Zealand and 10 Corps artillery, assisted by II Corps and the FEC.

The tremendous weight of bombs and artillery fire on 15 March did not destroy the enemy's defenses in Cassino and on Monastery Hill. Previous bombing and shelling together with German demolitions had already reduced many of Cassino's buildings to rubble. Protected by cellars, steel-and-concrete pillboxes, caves, and tunnels, the German troops suffered comparatively few casualties. Two companies of the 2d Battalion, 3d Parachute Regiment, lost all but a score of men. Other units were shaken and depleted but were still able to offer resistance. Many ammunition dumps were blown up, poorly protected weapons were destroyed, but the enemy's heavy weapons and artillery were only partly neutralized. A careful assessment of the bombing and shelling warrants the conclusion that it neither overcame the enemy's resistance nor appreciably reduced his morale. The Cassino effort, in fact, led to a critical reexamination of the use of air power in direct support of ground troops.

After the terrific air and artillery blows the 6 New Zealand Brigade with the 19 New Zealand Armoured Regiment made the first effort on the ground to capture Cassino. Infantry elements withdrew from the town before the bombing began, then moved forward behind the barrage at 1200. The 25 New Zealand Battalion entered from the north, with the 26 New Zealand Battalion following. Craters and debris caused by the bombing blocked the tanks that attempted to spearhead the assault. Nevertheless, in bitter house-to-house fighting the 26 New Zealand Battalion, assisted by the 24 New Zealand Battalion, penetrated to the near vicinity of Highway 6 within the town itself by 1900; further progress was hampered by a torrential rain throughout the night. The 25 New Zealand Battalion stormed Castle Hill from the south and captured it before dark, though isolated strongpoints continued to hold out. During the attack on Castle Hill the 7 Indian Brigade covered the assault from the north.

Moving down from the Cairo-Mt. Villa area, the 5 Indian Brigade took over Castle Hill in the night and pushed on to the west in the heavy rain. The 1/4 Essex remained on the hill to consolidate, except for one company which took Point 165 to the southwest. Two companies of the 1/6 Rajputana Rifles also reached this point, and one company of the 1/9 Gurkha Rifles went on to take Hangman's Hill early on 16 March. In Cassino during the 16th the 26 New Zealand Battalion gained about 200 yards south of Highway 6 on the east edge of town and was fighting near the Continental Hotel. Two troops of tanks had come in on the highway under cover of smoke; damage to the road from the north still blocked that approach. Farther south the 5 New Zealand Brigade approached to within 300 yards of the railroad station. Throughout the fighting on the 16th XII Air Support Command backed the attack with continuous bombing of enemy positions in the railroad station area and on Monastery Hill. Enemy air was also active, for at 1750 the Luftwaffe sent 18 planes to bomb the Bailey bridge over the canal southeast of the station. This attack damaged but did not destroy the bridge.

Intentions for the night of 16-17 March called for capturing Point 236 (another hairpin bend southwest of Point 165 on the ridge running up to Monastery Hill), reinforcing the 1/9 Gurkha Rifles on Hangman's Hill, and moving two more troops of tanks into Cassino. Early in the morning of 17 March an enemy counterattack forced the 1/6 Rajputana Rifles to fall back from Point 236 to Point 165. This attack was apparently intended to recapture Castle Hill, but the 1/4 Essex held firmly at that point. On Hangman's Hill the entire battalion of the 1/9 Gurkha Rifles consolidated as best it could under constant fire from the Abbey above.

On the 17th one squadron of 16 tanks and the 26 New Zealand Battalion, which struck south from Cassino, had two tanks in the railroad station at noon and also captured in the afternoon the "Hummocks" 200 yards to the south. Unlike previous assaults on the station, made from the east along the railroad, this attack from the north undoubtedly achieved an element of surprise, threatening to cut Highway 6 south of Cassino and link up with the Gurkha Rifles.

Progress during the first three days of the New Zealand Corps attack was satisfactory if not spectacular. Most of the ridge from Castle Hill to Hangman's Hill was in Allied possession; two-thirds of Cassino had been captured; and the line extended south beyond

the railroad station. The key to the situation was still Monastery Hill. The 1/9 Gurkha Rifles on Hangman's Hill was less than 500 yards from the Abbey, and less than 300 yards separated the 24 and 25 New Zealand Battalions from the southern edge of Cassino. Short as these distances were, our forces were unable to break through.

During the night of 17-18 March the 4 Indian Division continued to consolidate its grip on the ridge. Porter parties succeeded in getting supplies through to the 1/9 Gurkha Rifles on Hangman's Hill. This unit on the 18th sent one company to the east to occupy Point 202, and in the afternoon fighter-bombers dropped more supplies on Hangman's Hill. Most of the fighting on the 18th was in Cassino, where the 25 New Zealand Battalion and tanks were unsuccessful in two attempts to wipe out enemy units which had infiltrated in the night into the northwest corner of the town below Castle Hill. One company of the 24 New Zealand Battalion passed through the 1/4 Essex on Castle Hill, went on to Point 202, and attacked the southwest corner of Cassino. Machine-gun fire from Point 146 broke up this attack.

A strong assault on the Abbey was planned for the 19th, with the 1/4 Essex moving from Castle Hill to positions on the right of the 1/9 Gurkha Rifles. The enemy ruined these plans, for early in the morning of the 19th the 1st Battalion, 4th Parachute Regiment, counterattacked down the ravine running northeast from the Abbey. In a vicious drive the paratroopers captured Point 165 by 0900 and swept on to assault Castle Hill. Two companies were practically annihilated in this attempt; but the seizure of Point 165 isolated our troops on Hangman's Hill and Point 202. Tanks of the reconnaissance squadron of the 7 Indian Brigade, which made a diversionary attack from the northwest of the Abbey, were held up by soggy ground and minefields 500 yards southwest of Point 468 and were forced by artillery fire to withdraw. In Cassino the 28 New Zealand (Maori) Battalion fought in the area of the Continental Hotel, where enemy tanks were emplaced in the lobby.

During the night of 19-20 March the New Zealand Corps regrouped to continue the offensive while enemy artillery and mortar fire reached an unprecedented level. The 6 Royal West Kents, 36 Infantry Brigade (78 Division), relieved the groups on Castle Hill; the 23 New Zealand Battalion relieved the 25 New Zealand Battalion in the north part of Cassino; and the 6 New Zealand Brigade took over the south sector of Cassino. An attempt to get

porter parties through to Hangman's Hill failed, making supply by air drops necessary. There was very little action other than the house-to-house fighting in Cassino on 20 March against a reinforced enemy. The 78 Division boundary was moved north to a point midway between Highway 6 and the railroad station.

The attack that jumped off at 2300, 20 March, resulted in no gains. The 6 Royal West Kents attempted to recapture Points 165 and 236, but again enemy units infiltrated toward Castle Hill and our troops fell back to protect that position. On the right one company of the 2/7 Gurkha Rifles failed in an attempt to occupy Point 445. The 21 New Zealand Battalion south of Highway 6 attacked west in an effort to reach Points 202 and 146 east of Hangman's Hill. This attempt also failed. Progress was equally disappointing on 22 March, and the New Zealand Corps called off the battle. At the end of action on the 23d the enemy was still firmly established in Cassino, with one center of resistance in the northwest and another in the southwest. Six battalions of Allied infantry had been committed, but gains were insignificant in view of the casualties suffered. Isolated units still held Hangman's Hill and Point 202, but the enemy controlled Points 236 and 165. Although engineer resources had been used to the utmost to open up routes, our armor could not be employed decisively. These factors led to the decision to halt the offensive and to consolidate on Castle Hill and in the eastern part of Cassino. During the night of 24-25 March the 1/9 Gurkha Rifles withdrew from Hangman's Hill, and C Company, 24 New Zealand Battalion, gave up Point 202.

In spite of overwhelming air and artillery support Allied troops could not rout the paratroopers, who fought with rare tenacity for every rubble heap and every wall. More than 1,100 tons of bombs and nearly 200,000 artillery shells fell on the enemy in the space of a few hours on 15 March. By the 25th the staggering total of 588,094 artillery shells had been fired. Enemy artillery pieces in action were estimated at about 240. The Luftwaffe made 217 sorties over our lines as compared with very extensive Allied air support. The New Zealand Corps had 24 infantry battalions; the enemy had 14. There were about 16 enemy tanks in Cassino at any one time, and possibly 90 were available in the Liri Valley. Allied armor included 579 tanks, 59 armored cars, and 128 self-propelled support guns.

In spite of this impressive superiority in air, artillery, infantry,

and armor our gains were these: a few more blocks of courtyards and walls, Castle Hill, and a precarious hold on the railroad station. Our armor could not be employed effectively because of cratered roads, soggy ground, and debris. Tanks simply could not get through the rubble and water-filled craters produced by the bombing. Engineers could not clear the way until local resistance had been eliminated; but the infantry needed tanks to clear the strong-points holding up the engineers. Thus the vicious circle was complete. Artillery fire could not destroy the well prepared pillboxes, so strongly built that some withstood even direct bomb hits. The proximity of our own troops to the enemy also hampered the artillery. Infantry superiority was nullified by the nature of the terrain and the enemy's disposition of his forces. During 15-26 March the 3 divisions in the New Zealand Corps suffered 2,106 casualties, of which 287 were killed, 237 missing, and 1,582 wounded in action.

The entire Fifth Army attack on the southern front, 16 January-31 March, had been disappointing in its results. In the first part of the drive the 10 Corps thrust across the Garigliano had created a serious threat to the Gustav Line by 19 January; however, the enemy moved reserves quickly and stopped this advance by strong counterattacks at critical points. The crossing of the Rapido by the 36th Division on 20-22 January had been a sad failure. Though the 34th Division and the FEC had forced a break in the German defenses north of Cassino by 31 January, our weary forces could not exploit the first gains in time to make a breakthrough. By 12 February II Corps was exhausted and had relinquished the battle to the New Zealand Corps, which made two drives on Cassino. The first, opening on 15 February with the bombing of the Abbey, yielded no gains of consequence; the second, in mid-March, had very nearly succeeded in taking the Cassino fortress. But again the enemy held, and at the end of March the German line was essentially the same as on 12 February. Fifth Army was as far from Anzio as ever; there the beachhead forces had had to fight their desperate struggle without the expected aid from the south.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

<sup>1</sup>Statistics from machine records of July 1944. The 36th Division reports submitted immediately after the action overestimated the losses, as is usual in after-action reports.

<sup>2</sup>Hill 445 is about 550 yards south of Majola Hill. Point 445 is the same distance north of Monastery Hill.

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## CHAPTER V

# THE ANZIO BEACHHEAD

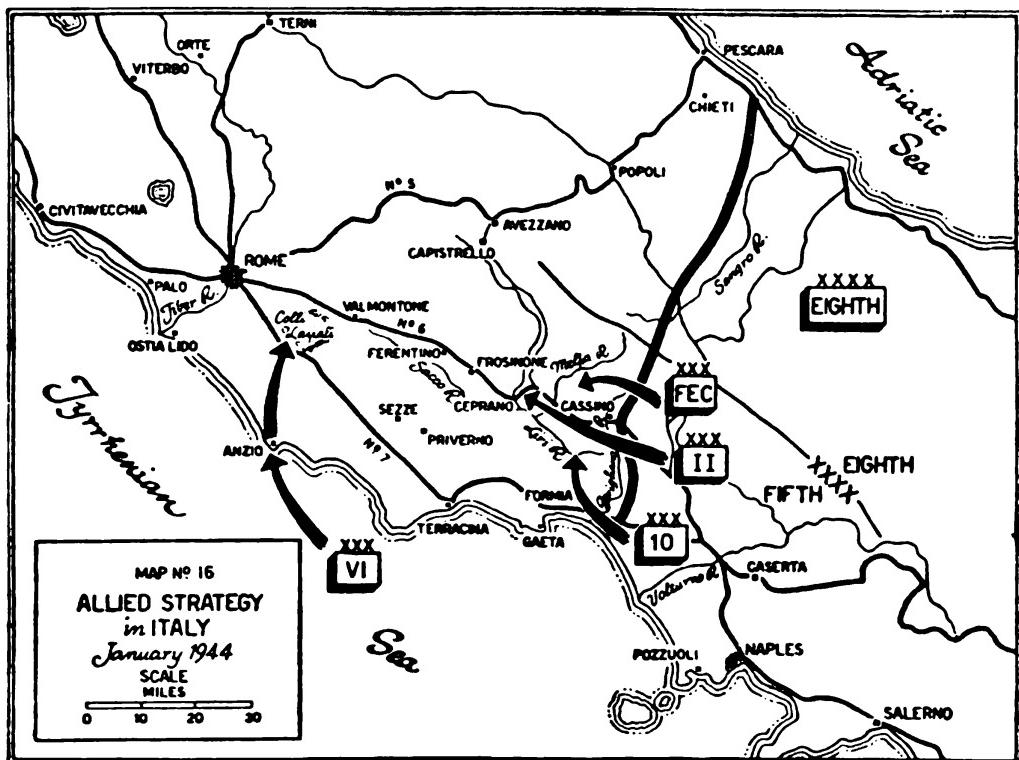
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### 1. PLANNING FOR OPERATION SHINGLE

TOGETHER with the coordinated attacks on the Cassino front the Anzio operation bids fair to be one of the most debated points of the Italian campaign. Here we must pass over the arguments of politics and higher strategy if we are to concentrate on what actually occurred in Operation Shingle, the Anzio landing. The idea of this operation goes back to a series of meetings at La Marsa, Tunisia, in late October and early November 1943 where General Eisenhower and his senior commanders examined plans for maintaining the impetus of the lagging offensive in Italy. General Alexander strongly urged launching an amphibious assault around the enemy's right flank as part of a general offensive to seize Rome. Landings in force behind the enemy lines to compel his withdrawal from prepared positions had been considered seriously by Fifth Army several times since our arrival in Italy, for our command of the sea and the long, exposed coasts of the Italian Peninsula invited such end runs. The necessary craft and troops, however, had always been lacking. Resources for the Italian campaign, it must be remembered, were ever limited by the potential or actual requirements of the main Allied offensive in France. At the La Marsa conferences the availability of landing craft was felt to be the critical factor, for 68 of the 90 LSTs in the Mediterranean were scheduled to leave at once for other theaters. General Eisenhower, however, obtained permission from the Combined Chiefs of Staff to retain the 68 LSTs until 15 December in order not to jeopardize the Italian campaign.

The disposition of these craft was discussed at a conference held by General Alexander at Bari on 8 November 1943, and the proposal was made to keep them after 15 December for an amphibious operation in support of the main drive toward Rome. On the day of the Bari conference General Alexander issued his plans for a coordinated effort to break through to Rome. The third phase of this effort, as already noted above, consisted of an amphibious operation directed on Colli Laziali, a commanding hill mass astride the vital communication routes supplying XIV Panzer Corps south of Rome. An amphibious landing on the enemy



flank, directed at Colli Laziali, would threaten to cut off the German troops. Combined with a frontal assault, this threat would drive the enemy north of the last barrier in the approach to Rome. It was considered essential that Fifth Army attack as soon as possible so that our troops on the south would be in position to support the amphibious operation prior to the withdrawal of the available craft; as a result Fifth Army launched its attack on the Winter Line on 2 December.

After the Bari conference planning for the newly named Operation Shingle became a joint responsibility of the Commanding General, Fifth Army; the Naval Commander, Shingle; and the Commanding General, XII Air Support Command. Working on a target date of 20 December, the planners spent mid-November at Caserta and produced the first Outline Plan Shingle. It called for the amphibious operation to take place when Fifth Army had advanced to the general line Capistrello-Ferentino-Priverno and was prepared for an all-out drive on Colli Laziali. (See Map 16.) Then Shingle Force would descend on the Tyrrhenian coast near Anzio, 31 miles southeast of Rome, to assist main Fifth Army in the capture of that hill mass. The plan assumed that the main Fifth Army attack would join the amphibious force within six days. Since only 42 LSTs with supporting craft had been allotted,

the assault force was limited to one division, reinforced by a tank battalion, a tank destroyer battalion, and two light antiaircraft battalions. The shortage of landing craft prevented an immediate resupply or troop follow-up, and only ten days' supply could be taken along.

As Fifth Army launched its major assault on the Winter Line, it became evident that Shingle would have to be postponed. Greatly increased enemy resistance in difficult mountain terrain brought a revised estimate that Fifth Army would not reach the Capistrello-Ferentino-Priverno line until 10 January 1944, and by 20 December even the revised estimate was clearly too optimistic. Since the LSTs now had to be released to the United Kingdom by 15 January, Shingle was apparently doomed to the discard.

Yet the tactical situation seemed increasingly to emphasize the desirability of an amphibious operation to break the stalemate on the Italian front. The first two phases of the 15th Army Group offensive had failed to achieve the expected results. Eighth Army had not reached the Pescara-Popoli road, and Fifth Army was making slow progress through the mountains of the Winter Line. Once the Winter Line was broken Fifth Army faced the yet more formidable Gustav Line positions, barring the entrance to the Liri Valley. If the Allies were to avoid a further long and arduous mountain campaign and were to force an enemy withdrawal north of Rome during the winter, the best strategy seemed to be to threaten his communications by an amphibious end run. General Clark, in fact, had suggested on 10 December that the phase line which Fifth Army had to reach might be cut down and Shingle launched without waiting until the overland attack was within supporting distance. Once in, the landing force would consolidate and make a stand until main Fifth Army came up. This conception would demand both a larger force and a resupply.

At the Tunis conference on 25 December, Prime Minister Churchill and the ranking Mediterranean commanders decided that an amphibious landing of not less than two assault divisions behind the enemy's right flank was essential for a victory in Italy. The necessary additional craft would be provided by delaying until 5 February the sailing of 56 LSTs to the United Kingdom and by temporarily withdrawing 16 LSTs from the Corsica run. Several restrictions, however, were imposed on Shingle. It was to be allowed to interfere neither with the cross-Channel landing nor with the air build-up in Corsica for the expected landing in south-

ern France. Owing to the departure of craft immediately after the operation, there could be no continued maintenance over the beaches or subsequent build-up of the initial force. Nonetheless, the Tunis decision marks the emergence of the second Shingle plan. Instead of being launched to assist main Fifth Army when it had reached a line north of Frosinone, Shingle was now a much larger operation, to be carried out regardless of the position of Fifth Army on the south.

Although the Tunis conference had determined that there could be no resupply or follow-up convoys, General Alexander and General Clark considered these essential to the success of Shingle. With the Germans developing their defenses along the Cassino line in front of Fifth Army, it was impossible to forecast where the southern front would be on D-day, and no time limit could be set for the junction of main Fifth Army with the landing force. Therefore it was imperative that the Anzio beachhead be able to support itself indefinitely against the expected enemy counter-attack. A conference on 7 January decided to put D-day forward as much as possible so as to employ the extra time gained before the withdrawal of craft for two trips to Anzio or, should the weather prove favorable, for three. Finally on the 8th General Alexander met Prime Minister Churchill at Marrakech, Morocco, and obtained approval for retention until the end of February of the 24 LSTs considered essential for the maintenance of the Shingle force.

The final G-4 plan called for the assault convoy to be completely unloaded within forty-eight hours. Everything would be combat loaded, ready for quick removal; LSTs would be filled with prestowed supply trucks, which would drive off the craft directly to corps dumps at Anzio. Though the possibility of bad weather and the shallowness of the beaches made the navy place no reliance on continued maintenance over the beaches, G-4 accepted this hazard and was prepared to maintain over the beaches as long as necessary. The small port of Anzio would be used as far as possible, but if it were not available LSTs and LCTs would unload by ponton causeway over the shallow beach. In addition to the pontoons, 30 LCTs and all available LCAs, LCVPs, and DUKWs would help unload the larger craft. Since the length of time for which the expedition would have to be supported by sea was highly indefinite, at least thirty-five days' supply was planned. In view of the weather the outline convoy schedule called for a convoy every three days with the expectation that on one of these three the

weather would permit getting through. Supplies would be carried by two methods, by bulk-loaded Liberty ships from North African ports and by truck-loaded LSTs from Naples.

Careful air and naval support plans were made, and on 12 January Fifth Army issued its orders to VI Corps under General Lucas to seize and secure a beachhead in the vicinity of Anzio, and then advance on Colli Laziali. To gain surprise there would be no preliminary bombardment, except a short, intense rocket barrage at H minus 10 to H minus 5 by three LCT(R)s. The beachhead would be seized by three coordinated assaults. On the right the 3d Division under General Truscott would land three regiments in assault over X-ray beaches, about four miles east of Anzio. The Ranger Force of three battalions, the 83d Chemical Battalion, and the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion would come in over a small beach adjacent to Anzio harbor with the mission of taking the port and clearing out any coastal defense batteries there. On Peter Beach, six miles northwest of Anzio, the 2 Brigade Group of the British 1 Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. W. R. C. Penney, would make the assault; the 2 Special Service Brigade of the 9 and 43 Commandos would land with it and strike east to establish a road block on the main road above Anzio. These forces would link up to consolidate a beachhead seven miles deep centering on the port of Anzio.

The assault plan assumed initial heavy resistance on the beaches and heavy counterattacks once the enemy was fully aware of the extent of our landing. Consequently VI Corps held out as a strong reserve the bulk of the 1 Division and placed great emphasis on digging in early on initial objectives to repel armored counter-attacks. Up to a few days before the landing it was planned to drop the 504th Parachute Infantry behind the beaches, but this drop was called off lest it prematurely disclose the area of our main assault; the paratroopers came in by sea as a corps reserve. Tentative reinforcements on follow-up convoys consisted of the 1st Armored Division (less Combat Command B) and the 45th Division.

It was expected that a landing in strength to the rear of XIV Panzer Corps would be considered an emergency to be met by all the German resources in Italy. Marshal Kesselring, a large part of his available reserves already committed to stem our thrust up the Liri Valley, would be compelled to withdraw troops from before main Fifth Army to meet the much graver threat to his rear.

He would surely concentrate enough strength to attempt to destroy the beachhead or at least to contain it. Once driven from their prepared mountain positions, and weakened by withdrawal of troops to meet the beachhead, the Germans should not be able to stay the advance of main Fifth Army, which would link up with the beachhead forces on the threshold of Rome. From the latest intelligence available on enemy troops in the Rome area the Army G-2 estimated that the enemy might build up to 31,000 by D plus 2 or 3; enemy air was not expected to be strong. If the Fifth Army attack in the south were sufficiently powerful and sustained, it should pin down all enemy reserves in that area. It was not believed that the Germans could bring down reinforcements quickly from north Italy, especially in face of our overwhelming air superiority; the estimated build-up from north of Florence was not more than two divisions by D plus 16. The final summary by G-2, Fifth Army, on 16 January detected an ebbing strength of the enemy on the Fifth Army front and doubted

if the enemy can hold the organized defensive line through Cassino against a co-ordinated army attack. Since this attack is to be launched before Shingle, it is considered likely that this additional threat will cause him to withdraw from his defensive position once he has appreciated the magnitude of that operation.

In two months Shingle had grown from a first tentative figure of 24,000 men to an expected eventual strength of 110,594. Originally conceived as a subsidiary operation on the left flank of a nearby Fifth Army it had developed, as the difficulty of quickly breaching the enemy mountain barriers became apparent, into a major operation far in the enemy rear. Just prior to the landing main Fifth Army would launch its powerful attack to break through the Gustav Line, draw in the enemy's reserves, and drive up the Liri Valley to link up with the beachhead forces. Eighth Army would demonstrate to pin down the enemy troops on its front. The maximum air effort of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces would be employed to knock out the Luftwaffe and block all routes by which the enemy could shift reserves. The Anzio landing would strike at the vital enemy lines of communication and threaten the rear of XIV Panzer Corps. High hopes were held that the combined offensives would prevent a stalemate on the Italian front and drive the German Tenth Army north of Rome.

## 2. ESTABLISHING THE BEACHHEAD

22 January-1 February 1944

After the major strategic decisions had been made, the work of mounting Operation Shingle began, and the assault troops converged on the Naples area, their markings removed and their radios silent for purposes of security. In the period 4-19 January the assault units carried out hurried but intensive training, culminating in Exercise Webfoot on the Salerno beaches during the last two days. The various mistakes shown in this rehearsal were corrected as far as possible, and the ground forces were ready for embarkation.

Meanwhile the air force had been doing its utmost to destroy the German air force in Italy and to cut all communication routes by which enemy reinforcements might reach the beachhead area. Although a great weight of bombs was dropped, it is difficult to assess the results of the air program on the enemy reaction to Shingle. The Germans did succeed in reinforcing their armies heavily from the north, and the German air force put on its biggest effort since the Sicilian campaign. The enemy's build-up was undoubtedly delayed, however, and his air strength cut down by our bombing. One concrete accomplishment of major significance was the surprise gained when we grounded the enemy long-range reconnaissance force by heavy raids on the Perugia airdrome. As a result, it is believed that the enemy flew no long-range reconnaissance missions for the three crucial days 19-21 January.

On 19-20 January the assault force of almost 50,000 men and 5,200 vehicles loaded for its water movement of 120 miles. In addition to cruisers, destroyers, and a host of lesser craft, the convoy included 84 LSTs, 8 LSIs, 96 LCIs, 50 LCTs, 2 command ships, and 4 Liberty ships with ten days' supplies of all types. At 0500, 21 January, the ships put out to sea and swung south around Capri on a long roundabout course to avoid German minefields and to deceive the enemy as to our destination. Mine sweepers preceded the craft to clear a channel through the coastal minefields. Cruisers and destroyers clung to the flanks to ward off enemy E-boats and submarines. An air umbrella of fighters crisscrossed constantly overhead. The enemy, however, seemed totally unaware of our coming. As night fell and darkness cloaked the convoy's movements, it swung sharply in toward Anzio. After over two months of planning, training, and mounting, Fifth Army was on the verge of landing below Rome.

At 0005, 22 January, concealed beneath a moonless night, the

Allied assault convoy dropped anchor off Anzio. Davits swung out and lowered the assault craft, patrol vessels herded the boats into formation, and soon the first waves headed away into the darkness. Naval scouts preceded them to locate and mark the beaches accurately. As yet there was no enemy reaction; the only sound was the hum of motors as the long lines of craft moved in toward shore. Our rocket fire brought forth no enemy reply; the shore loomed dark and silent ahead.

Promptly at H-hour, 0200, the first waves of craft nosed onto the beach, and the assault troops swarmed ashore. To their astonishment there was no enemy to greet them. The highly unexpected had happened. We had caught the enemy completely by surprise. Except for a few small coast artillery and antiaircraft detachments, the only resistance to our push inland from the beaches was from elements of two depleted coast-watching battalions of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, which had just been relieved from hard fighting along the Gustav Line. All assault landings were smoothly effected according to plan, and by midday all elements of VI Corps had become firmly established on their initial objectives. The port of Anzio was taken intact, and by afternoon was ready to receive four LSTs and three LCTs simultaneously. At midnight on D-day 36,034 men, 3,069 vehicles, and large quantities of supply, 90 percent of the assault convoy load, had been brought ashore. Enemy air raids began at 0850 and consisted of three attacks by an estimated 18-28 fighter-bombers; damage was relatively negligible. On our side American and British planes flew over 1,200 sorties on D-day, bombing bottleneck rail and highway junctions south of Rome, strafing the roads, and covering the convoy. Two million leaflets were also dropped over the German lines in the south, announcing "*Allierte Landung bei Rom!*"

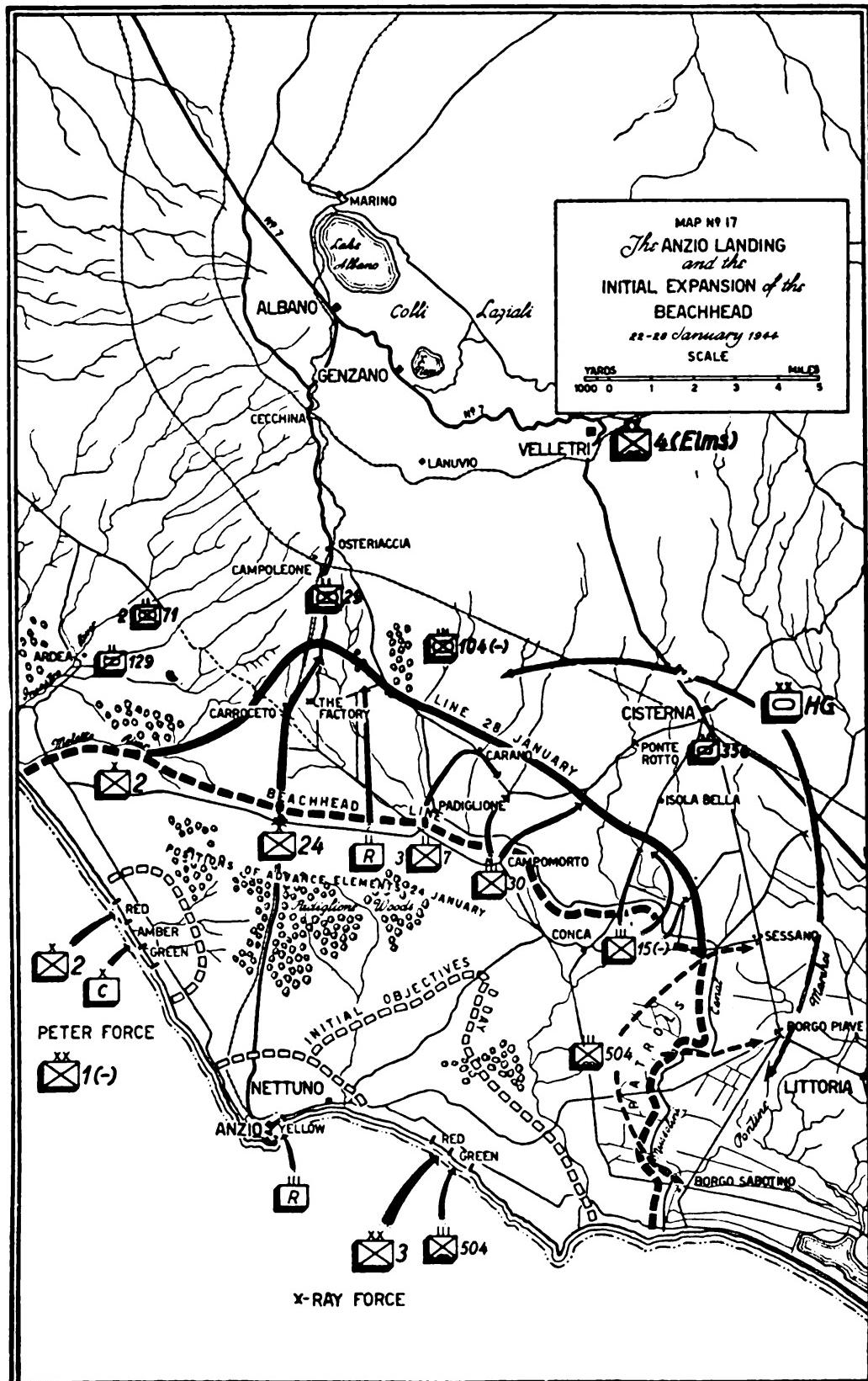
VI Corps now began to push inland to objectives on the narrow Roman coastal plain. Southeast of Anzio the plain is covered by the famous Pontine Marshes; northwest toward the Tiber it is rolling farm country, often wooded. Twenty miles inland from Anzio the plain is bounded by the volcanic heights of Colli Laziali, guarding the southern approaches to Rome. (See Map 17.) East of Colli Laziali the mountains fall into the valley by Velletri which leads inland toward Highway 6 at Valmontone. On the other side of this valley rise the peaks of the Lepini Mountains, which stretch along the inner edge of the Pontine Marshes southeast toward Terracina.

The stretch of coastal plain around Anzio is roughly divided into three major sections. First is a five-mile belt of low scrub timber interspersed with bare, open fields, which encircles the port of Anzio. This wasteland proved of marked value to our beachhead because it both screened the port and beach areas from enemy observers inland and afforded concealed dump and bivouac areas for our troops. North of this wooded section the beachhead area is divided into two parts by the main highway leading inland from Anzio to Albano. West of the road the plain is cut by a series of stream gullies, the largest of which are the Moletta and Incastro, running southwest from the slopes of Colli Laziali toward the sea. These gullies, though their small streams are easily fordable, are often 50 feet deep and proved difficult obstacles for armor to cross.

East of the Albano road gently rolling, cultivated fields stretch east toward Cisterna. In this region of open country, extending north from the first railroad overpass on the Albano road past Carroceto and Campoleone to Colli Laziali, lies the best avenue of approach in or out of the beachhead, which was to be the scene of major German and Allied attacks. On the east these fields shade into the northern edge of the Pontine Marshes, a low, flat region of irrigated fields interlaced with an intricate network of drainage ditches. Their treeless, level expanse offers scant cover to any troops, and during the rainy season heavy equipment would bog down in the fields.

Most of the beachhead area was a part of the most elaborate reclamation and resettlement project of the Fascist régime, the draining of the Pontine Marshes. Low, swampy bog land, formerly nothing but a breeding ground for malarial mosquitoes, had been converted into an area of cultivated fields, carefully drained and irrigated by an extensive series of canals and pumping stations. Only in the area immediately north of Anzio and Nettuno had the scrub timber, bog, and rolling grazing land been left untouched. The entire project was spotted with new, standardized two-story farmhouses, placed at frequent intervals along the network of paved and gravel roads crisscrossing the farmlands. Such places as the community center at Aprilia, called the "Factory" by our troops, and the provincial capital of Littoria were modernistic model towns. Anzio and Nettuno along the shore, which date back to Roman times, were popular seaside resorts.

An area roughly 7 miles deep by 15 miles wide around Anzio



was chosen for consolidation as the initial Allied beachhead. Its 26-mile perimeter was considered the maximum which could be held by General Lucas's limited forces and yet include the best natural features for defense. In the British sector, west of the Albano road, the beachhead was bounded by the Moletta River. The rough stream gullies which characterize this region were expected to give protection to the British flank. In the broad, open central beachhead sector, east of the Albano road, the line ran four miles across the fields to meet the west branch of the Mussolini Canal below the village of Padiglione. From Padiglione east the entire right flank of the beachhead was protected by the west branch of the Mussolini Canal and then, after its junction with the Mussolini Canal proper, by that barrier south to the sea. Though the smaller west branch is not much of an obstacle, the 170-foot main canal, which drains the northern edge of the Pontine Marshes, is built like an antitank ditch, with steeply sloping sides and a shallow, 16-foot-wide stream in the middle. The canal and marshes made the right flank of the beachhead a poor avenue of attack and enabled us to hold it with a minimum force.

Remarkably little fighting was required for the 3d Division and the 1 Division to reach this initial beachhead by the 24th. Only in the Mussolini Canal area was there any serious opposition, for here the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division had begun to make its appearance by the night of the 22d, rushing up from Littoria and Frosinone. Even at the time, and still more later, there was considerable expression of opinion that our expansion toward Colli Laziali should have been more rapid; but, whatever the eventual verdict, one thing must be remembered: the rate of our advance and the successful retention of our beachhead depended on the outcome of the race between us and the enemy to build up the forces on either side. Though the enemy had completely failed to foresee our landing at Anzio and had apparently expected it either at Gaeta or at Leghorn, he quickly recovered and diverted to Anzio large portions of the reserves he was moving from the Rome area, the Adriatic, and north Italy to bolster the sagging Gustav Line. By 24 January the pattern of enemy reaction had taken shape. Aggressive, tank-supported patrols probed our strength and dispositions, while at the same time screening the enemy's own concentrations and delaying our advance inland as he hastily prepared defensive positions to seal the beachhead. After the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division, the first

unit to arrive was the 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, rushed from Pescara to reinforce the weak elements of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division facing the British along the Albano road. The 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, just disengaged in the Liri Valley, appeared in the central beachhead sector above Padiglione. Behind this screen of mobile forces the enemy was assembling his main strength in the Velletri area, not committing it until our intentions became clear.

Motor transport movements from north, south, and east, as reported by our air reconnaissance, indicated that other substantial reinforcements were on the way, and by the 26th the enemy build-up totalled an estimated three full divisions, with a possible four more en route. Our constant air and naval attacks on road junctions, bridges, and motor transport on roads leading toward the beachhead delayed but could not prevent these moves. In the next three days advance guards of the 1st Parachute and 26th Panzer Divisions from the Adriatic arrived to stiffen the depleted Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division before Cisterna and Littoria. The newly formed 4th Parachute Division began moving down from Velletri to contain our left flank along the Moletta River. Interspersed were miscellaneous smaller units hastily gathered from wherever available to man the still rudimentary defensive lines.

On our side the failure of the main Fifth Army attack to pierce the Gustav Line reduced the prospect of quickly linking up the southern front with the beachhead and of forcing a general retreat of the enemy. Since the German command was clearly moving heavy forces against the beachhead, it was felt that if VI Corps advanced too far inland toward Colli Laziali with its limited strength on 24 January it might be so extended as to risk being cut off by a sudden German counterthrust. Consequently VI Corps consolidated its position during the next five days and, while waiting for reinforcements, made only limited attacks. The 3d Division thrust toward Cisterna on 25-27 January and gained points within three miles of the town; the 1 Division took the Factory on the 25th and had advanced another one and one-half miles up the Albano road by the 28th. Behind these attacks, which met considerable resistance, the build-up of supplies and troops continued as rapidly as possible despite increased enemy shelling of the port areas and constant, stabbing Luftwaffe raids. By 30 January the 1st Armored Division (less Combat Command B)

and the 45th Division had closed at the beachhead, and essential corps troops—especially artillery—also arrived. General Lucas now had the equivalent of four divisions under his command and felt strong enough to attack.

The attack order called for VI Corps to advance on 30 January to gain the high ground at Colli Laziali and, if the attack progressed satisfactorily, to be prepared to push toward Rome. Resumption of the 3d Division push on Cisterna, originally scheduled for the 29th, was delayed one day to permit coordinated corps action. On the right flank the 3d Division, after reaching Highway 7 at Cisterna, was to advance northwest to seize the high ground above Velletri. In the center the 1 Division was to drive up the Albano road to seize the high ground above Albano and Genzano on the south slope of Colli Laziali. The 1st Armored Division under General Harmon was to swing around the left of the 1 Division and seize the high ground above Marino on the west slope. A preliminary artillery preparation was not considered necessary, but extensive supporting fires, a smoke screen laid by the air force at daylight, and naval gunfire support were planned. The air force prepared an elaborate air support program including special air cover for the advance of our armor.

The 3d Division planned to attack before dawn on the 30th to get astride Highway 7 at Cisterna. To spearhead the attack and seize Cisterna by surprise General Truscott picked his Ranger battalions. Patrol reports and a careful reconnaissance of approach sites indicated that the enemy had not yet consolidated his defenses, and Colonel Darby, Ranger Force commander, believed his men could sift through the four miles to Cisterna. The 1st and 3d Ranger Battalions slipped across the Mussolini Canal just after midnight, moving in column of battalions. Concealed beneath a moonless, cloudy sky, the long column crept silently up the narrow Pantano ditch, which runs northwest across the fields to the right of the Conca–Isola Bella–Cisterna road. By dawn the head of the leading battalion had come out of the ditch where it crossed the road and was within 800 yards of Cisterna. As daylight revealed the head of the column moving up the road, the Rangers ran into a strong German force led by three assault guns. Our men deployed and the three guns were knocked out, but when the light improved German machine guns, mortars, and snipers concealed in houses and haystacks all around them opened up with heavy fire. Our men were caught without cover in the open, treeless fields,

their chance for surprise completely lost. Anticipating a renewal of the attack on Cisterna, the enemy had moved in veteran paratroopers from the 1st Parachute Division to stiffen the defense; evidently he had also detected the Rangers' approach through his lines and had prepared an ambush.

The Rangers, pinned down in the open fields, fought desperately through the morning against the entrenched Germans all about them. The 4th Ranger Battalion and the 3d Division made every effort to respond to their appeals for help, but the 4th Ranger Battalion, which had jumped off with the main attack at 0200 to follow up the Conca-Cisterna road, was stopped by heavy enemy machine-gun fire below Isola Bella. The battalion was held here all day, suffering heavy casualties in exchanging fire with the enemy only 200 yards distant. About noon enemy tanks attacked the 1st and 3d Ranger Battalions in the pocket below Cisterna, racing back and forth among the Ranger positions and cutting the battalions up into small groups. Bazookas and sticky grenades, which were all the Rangers had, were not enough, and as the tanks closed in the shattered battalions attempted to withdraw. It was too late. The Germans had hemmed them in all around, and our troops were unable to break through. Of 767 men in the two Ranger battalions, only 6 escaped; the rest, for the most part, were taken prisoner.

The main attack of the 3d Division on the 30th, with the 7th Infantry under Colonel Sherman on the left and the 15th Infantry under Lt. Col. Ashton H. Manhart on the right, gained the high ground overlooking Ponte Rotto and the village of Isola Bella at the cost of heavy casualties. Although the 15th Infantry had by afternoon pushed to within supporting distance of the Rangers, it was too late, for the trapped force had already surrendered. A diversionary attack by the 504th Parachute Infantry under Colonel Tucker on the right drove north along the Mussolini Canal but could not reach Highway 7. Renewed attacks on the afternoon of the 31st and on the morning of 1 February ran into even stiffer opposition backed by tanks; by noon on the 1st it was clear that the 3d Division, exhausted by three days of bitter fighting, could not hope to take Cisterna in the face of the ever increasing build-up of enemy troops. Instead, the German concentration opposite the 3d Division and in particular the appearance of the 26th Panzer Division, the enemy's chief mobile reserve, forecast an early German counterattack. General

Truscott ordered all troops to dig in immediately to meet the expected enemy thrust. In three days the 3d Division had gained two to three miles up the roads leading to Cisterna but had been unable to break through the last 1500 yards to seize the town. Since the landing on the 22d the division and attachments had lost 3,131 casualties and 26 tanks and tank destroyers. Now our men hastily dug in behind their own wire, minefields, and intrenchments to fight for what they had gained. An uneasy lull settled over the 3d Division front as both Americans and Germans girded for the blows to come.

While the 3d Division drove on Cisterna and Velletri, General Lucas made his main effort up the Albano road. Shortly before midnight on the 29th the 24 Guards Brigade attacked to secure a line of departure; on the following afternoon the 3 Brigade passed through in the main drive on Campoleone, which gained the high ground just south of the Campoleone overpass. At the same time the 1st Armored Division was struggling to secure a line of departure along the old railroad bed which ran northwest from Carroceto, but mines, terrain, and enemy opposition held up our tanks considerably. Continuation of the attack by the British and by the American armor on the 31st was met by even stiffer resistance. At nightfall VI Corps ordered a halt in the attack up the Albano road. In two days of sharp fighting the 1 Division and the 1st Armored Division had inflicted heavy losses on the enemy but were unable to break through his defensive positions.

The VI Corps attack out of the beachhead, 30 January-1 February, had spent itself on the surprisingly strong German defenses. We had expected the enemy positions before Cisterna and Campoleone to be merely delaying positions while his main line of resistance lay back on the high ground of Colli Laziali and the Lepini Range. Instead, the enemy, appreciating the value of these key road junctions and the limited strength of the forces opposing him, determined to make his stand before Cisterna and Campoleone. Anticipating a renewal of our drive up the two main axes of advance inland, the Germans had moved in reinforcements in wholly unexpected strength. By feverish work the enemy had also succeeded in building up a strong system of defenses barring the approaches to Cisterna and Campoleone. Every house and village was converted into a strongpoint, and these were connected by well camouflaged machine-gun nests.

and rifle pits. Tanks and roving self-propelled guns supported these positions. Our troops further encountered massed artillery and Nebelwerfer fire in a way seldom employed by the Germans in Italy. American troops again found, as they had all through the Italian campaign, the excellent fortification value of the heavy stone construction of Italian farmhouses. Reducing each house was a separate siege operation that required tanks and tank destroyers to pulverize the building before the infantry could move in. Sniping and infiltration by small enemy groups continued long after we had seized key points, and the infantry continually had to mop up by-passed pockets of Germans, who fired on them from the rear.

Every advantage of terrain, too, lay with the enemy. On the left flank our armor proved incapable of surmounting the natural obstacles presented by rough stream gullies and ground made soggy by repeated rains. On the right flank the route of our advance lay open over muddy fields, offering scant cover to the attackers while providing excellent fields of fire for defending troops. January rains made ground movement difficult and low clouds during the period of our attack severely hampered air support.

### 3. VI CORPS GOES ON THE DEFENSIVE

1-3 February 1944

After a conference with General Clark on 1 February General Alexander ordered that Fifth Army should continue the attack to extend the beachhead to the Incastro River-Campoleone-Cisterna line and then organize for defense. The initial beachhead had been the largest that could be held with the limited number of troops originally landed, but it was so small that any part could be reached by enemy artillery and there was little room for defense in depth. A breakthrough at any point would bring the Germans almost to the sea. Consequently General Alexander desired to extend the beachhead farther inland and anchor it on the strongpoints of Cisterna and Campoleone. By the afternoon of 1 February, however, it was evident at the front that these objectives could not be immediately attained. The enemy build-up had become so threatening that VI Corps ordered all divisions to organize to repel a counterattack. On 2 February General Clark radioed General Lucas to consolidate the beachhead and prepare for defense.

All units at the beachhead began immediate preparation of de-

fensive positions in accordance with oral orders of VI Corps issued on 3 February and confirmed on the following day by a written plan of corps defense. The line marked out in our initial attack order, which ran from the Moletta River on the left flank across the open fields of the central sector to the west branch of the Mussolini Canal and south along the main canal to the sea, was fortified as the final beachhead line of resistance. During the period of the expansion of the beachhead VI Corps had pushed out beyond this line in the central sector an average of from two to four miles with the Campoleone salient extending six miles north up the Albano road. It was the intention of VI Corps to hold the ground which had been won, falling back to the final beachhead line as a last resort.

The 45th Division under General Eagles was made responsible for preparing defenses along the Moletta River and holding them with one regimental combat team. The right flank was given to the newly arrived 1st Special Service Force under Brig. Gen. Robert T. Frederick. The critical central sector was held by the 1 Division and the 3d Division, with the dividing point at the village of Carano. The 1st Armored Division (less Combat Command B) and the 45th Division (less one regimental combat team) were to be in corps reserve prepared to counterattack on corps order. The 36th and 39th Engineer Combat Regiments, in addition to their engineer functions, were to assist in defending the coastline against airborne and seaborne raids and were to be prepared to assemble on four hours' notice as corps reserve. At the port the 540th Engineer Combat Regiment under Col. George W. Marvin, which passed to Army control on 6 February when Fifth Army took over control of supply at the beachhead, was to defend X-ray and Nettuno beaches.

By 2 February VI Corps had suffered 6,487 casualties, and many of its units were seriously under strength; on the other hand we had taken 1,485 prisoners and had inflicted heavy casualties upon the foe. We had driven 18 miles inland to Campoleone and 15 toward Cisterna before the swift enemy reaction had sealed in the beachhead. Allied troops in Italy were on the defensive for the first time since the crucial days at Salerno. Hitler had reputedly ordered that the "abscess" below Rome must be removed at all costs. VI Corps, dug in behind its hastily laid minefields and wire, was confident that it could repulse the enemy counter-offensive while building up sufficient forces to resume the assault itself.

#### 4. THE FIRST ENEMY COUNTERATTACKS

3-12 February 1944

Undoubtedly the enemy had won the first stage of the race to strengthen the opposing forces at Anzio. XIV Panzer Corps, occupied at Cassino, could send only the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division and the 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, but Marshal Kesselring drew heavily from units facing Eighth Army and from the extensive pool of troops resting, refitting, or guarding the line of communications in north Italy, Yugoslavia, and even southern France. This troop shift was aided by the fact that once our amphibious task force was committed it was no longer necessary to guard the long Italian and southern French coastline from seaborne attack. Also, once the enemy appreciated that at least two divisions had been moved from the Adriatic to reinforce Fifth Army for its offensive, it was not necessary to keep large forces on the Adriatic front, and no less than three full divisions moved from that area to Anzio and Cassino. The Luftwaffe, too, was recalled in strength to Italy to harass our vulnerable seaborne supply lines.

Traveling by every available means—rail, motor, and even air—German reinforcements poured down the roads leading toward the beachhead. Our constant air attacks hampered but could not prevent these movements. First to arrive were units from the nearby Eighth Army front. The bulk of the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division, en route to bolster the line above Cassino, was quickly diverted to the beachhead. After it came the 26th Panzer Division, strongest German armored formation in Italy, and elements of the crack 1st Parachute Division. Both of these formations arrived just in time before Cisterna to aid in turning back our assault.

The largest and most unexpected German reinforcements hastened down from the north. The 715th Grenadier (Light) Division, a new motorized unit from Avignon, came down the west coast in its own transport in seven to nine days. Advance elements arrived in the line around Campoleone at the end of our attack. By 1 February the arrival of the 145th Grenadier Regiment (65th Grenadier Division) from Genoa, the reconnaissance battalion of the 114th Light Division from Istria, and elements of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division *Reichsführer SS* from Florence presaged the appearance of part or all of these formations on the beachhead front. A battalion from the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division also showed up from the south. In addition, elements of the 71st Grenadier Division—the reconnaissance bat-

talion, the artillery regiment, and the 194th Grenadier Regiment—en route from Trieste to the Liri Valley were diverted to Anzio. Hastily drawing these and other miscellaneous formations from wherever available, the enemy faced us on 3 February with elements of no less than 14 divisions, with the remainder of four of them believed en route.

By this date, after a succession of groupings and regroupings as the Germans met each new situation, the pattern of enemy tactical organization had emerged. To command the force around the beachhead Fourteenth Army under General Eberhard von Mackensen had been called down from Verona. I Parachute Corps, from the Rome area, faced the British west of the Albano road, while LXXVI Panzer Corps, transferred from the Adriatic, controlled the sector to the east. The German Tenth Army under General Heinrich von Vietinghoff *genannt* Scheel was thus left free to devote all its attention to the southern front.

The enemy attempt to wipe out our Anzio beachhead fell into three phases: first, an attack to pinch out the British salient up the Albano road and to capture the strategic Factory area; second, an all-out attempt to break through to the sea along the axis of the Albano road; and third, an attack from Cisterna with the minimum objective of reaching the Mussolini Canal. Of these three major attacks, which cover the period 3 February-4 March, the first on 3-12 February served to set the stage for what was to be the decisive battle. It was, nonetheless, a bitterly contested and bloody phase of the defense of the beachhead.

Only two main routes offered to the enemy terrain suitable to the employment of tanks and heavy equipment: the roads leading southwest from Cisterna to Anzio and the paved highway running south from Albano toward Anzio. The initial enemy attacks concentrated on the latter axis, where the lines of the 1 Division reached as far north as Campoleone Station, five miles from the dominating heights of Colli Laziali. This narrow salient, approximately four miles deep and barely one and one-half miles wide at its apex, formed a threat to the security of the enemy's main line of resistance along the railroad embankment running east and west through Cisterna and Campoleone. Also, if Mackensen could pinch it off and then drive on to take the Factory area, he would have a good base from which to launch his major effort.

On 3 February the build-up of enemy forces was not sufficient to permit a major effort, but conditions were extremely favorable

for an attack with a limited objective. A period of dark, cloudy days promised to keep our air support to a minimum, and the Campoleone salient invited an attack. At this time the 3 Brigade held the apex of the salient, with the 24 Guards Brigade on the left and the 2 Brigade on the right. Just before midnight on the 3d the enemy artillery opened up on the base of the salient, and enemy infantry began infiltrating on both sides, driving deep wedges through the 1 Irish Guards and the 6 Gordons near the base in an effort to cut off the whole of the 3 Brigade. In heavy fighting throughout the rainy, sullen 4th the 1 Division managed to check the penetrations, and the 1 London Scottish from the fresh 168 Brigade, supported by the 46 Royal Tanks, broke through to the 3 Brigade by 1700. After dark the salient was evacuated and our forward lines were withdrawn to a new line approximately a mile north of Carroceto and the Factory. British casualties had been extremely heavy, totalling over 1,400 killed, wounded, and missing in action.

During the next three days the enemy continued his build-up and launched probing attacks against our lines, especially against the 3d Division in front of Cisterna on the night of 5 February. Though Ponte Rotto was taken, these attacks were diversionary in nature, for capture of the Factory was a logical next move if the enemy planned to make his all-out effort along the axis of the Albano road. The Factory itself, before it was leveled by weeks of bombing and shelling, was a compact, geometrically laid out cluster of three and four-story brick buildings designed to be the epitome of Fascist farm settlements. Located on a slight rise of ground, it stood like a fortress dominating the surrounding countryside. The hamlet of Carroceto, 500 yards to the southwest of the Factory and just north of the overpass which crosses the Albano road and the parallel railroad, was an equally important objective. Possession of the Factory and Carroceto would offer the enemy strong defensive positions as well as assembly areas from which to launch further attacks. In addition they were the focal points of a network of roads leading south and southeast. As the wet, boggy ground of the beachhead made employment of tanks off the roads virtually impossible, control of the road network was of great tactical value to the attacker. Once the enemy had won the Factory and Carroceto, he would be in position to strike at several different points along the final beachhead line of defense.

To protect the Factory area the 1 Division had in line the 24 Guards Brigade on Buonriposo Ridge in the deep gully country to the left of the Albano road, the 168 Brigade in the center, and the 2 Brigade on the right. After the losses sustained in the fighting at Campoleone the 1 Division was considerably below strength, and the troops, fighting in rain, mud, and near-freezing weather, had had little rest since D-day. The supply system was also under strain, for enemy shelling of the beachhead increased steadily as the German long-range 150mm guns and 170mm guns moved into positions in the center below Colli Laziali. On the afternoon of the 5th the air strip at Nettuno was shelled, and the field had to be abandoned as a permanent base. In general the shelling was seldom accurate, but the rear areas of the beachhead were so congested that material damage and casualties were inevitable. More dangerous were the enemy air raids, which continued in strength and hampered our unloading.

The enemy plan of attack on the Factory called first for a diversionary attack by the 4th Parachute Division on the Moletta River. This attack was launched in company strength about midnight 6-7 February against the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry. Then the reinforced 65th Grenadier Division of I Parachute Corps was to thrust across Buonriposo Ridge, and Battle Group Graeser (715th Grenadier Division, reinforced) of LXXVI Panzer Corps was to attack to the east of the Factory. The enemy's commitment was large, including six full regiments.

Air and artillery activity on the 7th foreshadowed the attack, which started at 2100, 7 February, with heavy artillery concentrations on both flanks of the 1 Division front. Then came the infiltrations up the deep gullies in the dark night as the 145th Grenadier Regiment fought its way through the 2 North Staffs on Buonriposo Ridge. Before midnight the attack had spread to the front of the 5 Grenadier Guards and the 1 Scots Guards to the northeast. Small groups armed with machine pistols and light machine guns pushed behind the forward British units, cut communications, and organized small pockets of resistance deep within the lines. After our troops had exhausted their ammunition firing on an enemy who appeared to be striking from all directions, the main enemy force would overrun the position. By daybreak Buonriposo Ridge was in enemy hands, but desperate fighting continued in the vicinity throughout the 8th as the reserve 3 Brigade counter-attacked to regain the lost ground. These attacks were only par-

tially successful but served to bolster the hardpressed 24 Guards Brigade. The coordinated thrust east of the Factory by three regiments of Battle Group Graeser against the 168 Brigade made only limited gains on the 8th.

In the early morning hours of the 9th the infiltrations began again along the 1 Division front, the main emphasis this time by four regiments of Battle Group Graeser against the 168 Brigade. At daylight the enemy was through the lines of the 1 London Irish and the 10 Royal Berks, and by early afternoon he held possession both of the Factory and of the lateral road immediately to its east. Counterattacks by the 1st Armored Regiment, the 1st Battalion against Buonriposo Ridge and the 3d Battalion against the Factory, were stopped by hastily laid minefields, antitank guns, and the mud; naval shelling and air support could not prevent the enemy's consolidation of his gains. Shortly after midnight on 9-10 February the Germans renewed their attack, pushing through the 24 Guards Brigade toward Carroceto. Two companies of the 1 Scots Guards were cut off, and the remainder were forced to fall back on the 5 Grenadier Guards at the overpass south of Carroceto.

Again on the 10th our corps artillery and the air force gave all the aid they could muster to support the hard-pressed 1 Division. At 0900 two enemy attacks forming up at the Carroceto railroad station were dispersed by a concentration of 200 guns representing both division and corps artillery. At the same time wave after wave of heavy, medium, and light bombers attacked assembly areas along the Albano road from Campoleone to Albano. All the resources of the Strategic and Tactical Air Forces were allotted to VI Corps. Unfortunately a heavy overcast began developing at 0945, and an hour later further bombing was out of the question. One hundred and seventy-four medium bombers and two groups of heavy bombers were forced to turn back without unloading their bombs.

By noon of the 10th the enemy held the Carroceto railroad station as well as the Factory. The objectives of I Parachute Corps and LXXVI Panzer Corps had finally been achieved. It is impossible to estimate accurately the price they paid, but it was very high. The enemy had planned to take Carroceto and the Factory in one night. Instead it had required three full days of bitter fighting. Each day he was forced to throw in more and more of his reserves until he had committed the equivalent of over six

full regiments. His tactics of night infiltrations had proved often very successful; during the daylight hours, when our artillery could fire on observed targets, he suffered disproportionately heavy losses. Air bombardment and naval gunfire also aided in disorganizing the enemy attacks, and the continuous fighting had undoubtedly tired the enemy troops as well as the British defenders. The VI Corps G-2 estimated that the enemy would need some time to reorganize before renewing the attack.

The hard and protracted struggle to hold the Factory area had in a very literal sense drained the fighting strength of the 1 Division. It was in no condition to launch a counterattack or even to hold the positions to which it had been forced back. On the afternoon of 10 February the 168 Brigade was estimated to be at less than one-third normal strength, and many other units were at no better than half-strength. In addition, the weather for the past three days had been almost consistently cold, windy, and rainy. Foxholes dug in the wet, boggy ground quickly filled with water, and after a few days in the line troops suffered from trench foot and exposure. It was important for VI Corps not only to regain the Factory area but also to effect the relief of at least a major part of the 1 Division. The first step had been taken on the night of 9-10 February when the 180th Infantry under Colonel Dulaney took over the positions of the 2 Brigade just west of Carano. The next night the 179th Infantry under Colonel Kammerer relieved the 168 Brigade south of the Factory and launched a counterattack at 0630, 11 February, to retake the Factory. Aided by the 191st Tank Battalion, men of the 1st Battalion made their way into the Factory in the afternoon, only to be driven out. Though our artillery and tanks converted the buildings into a blazing mass of ruins, the enemy held; prisoners revealed that an intercepted radio message had given them foreknowledge of the attack. Another attack before dawn on the 12th likewise failed, and the 45th Division gave up the effort to regain the Factory.

## 5. HOLDING THE BEACHHEAD

16-18 February 1944

No one at the beachhead believed that the enemy would be content with the capture of the Factory and Carroceto.<sup>1</sup> The Factory area provided an excellent springboard from which to launch further attacks. The network of roads leading south and southeast offered the enemy the opportunity for at least limited employment of tanks; there was no natural obstacle, such as the Mussolini Canal, to impede his advance; and once the three miles of open country lying between the Factory area and the final beachhead line of defense had been crossed, the enemy could employ his favorite tactics of infiltration in the tangled underbrush and scrub forest of the Padiglione Woods, which stretch south almost to Anzio. The enemy was in a favorable position; it was merely a question of concentrating sufficient forces to effect a breakthrough.

While Mackensen paused for reorganization, Fifth Army did its utmost to reinforce the beachhead. The 36th Engineers under Col. Thomas H. Stanley took over a portion of the Moletta River line, relieving all but one battalion of the 157th Infantry. (See Map 18.) The last elements of the 56 Division under General Templer closed at Anzio on the 18th; even before, in the night of 15-16 February, the division took over the left flank from the positions of the 36th Engineers almost to the Albano road. General Eagles of the 45th Division had all three of his regiments in line to the east, the 157th Infantry under Colonel Church on the left of the road, the 179th Infantry in the center, and the 180th Infantry on the right. By the morning of 16 February General Lucas thus had fresh troops holding the whole of the critical area lying on each side of the Albano road, and the 1 Division had been placed in reserve for refitting and rest.

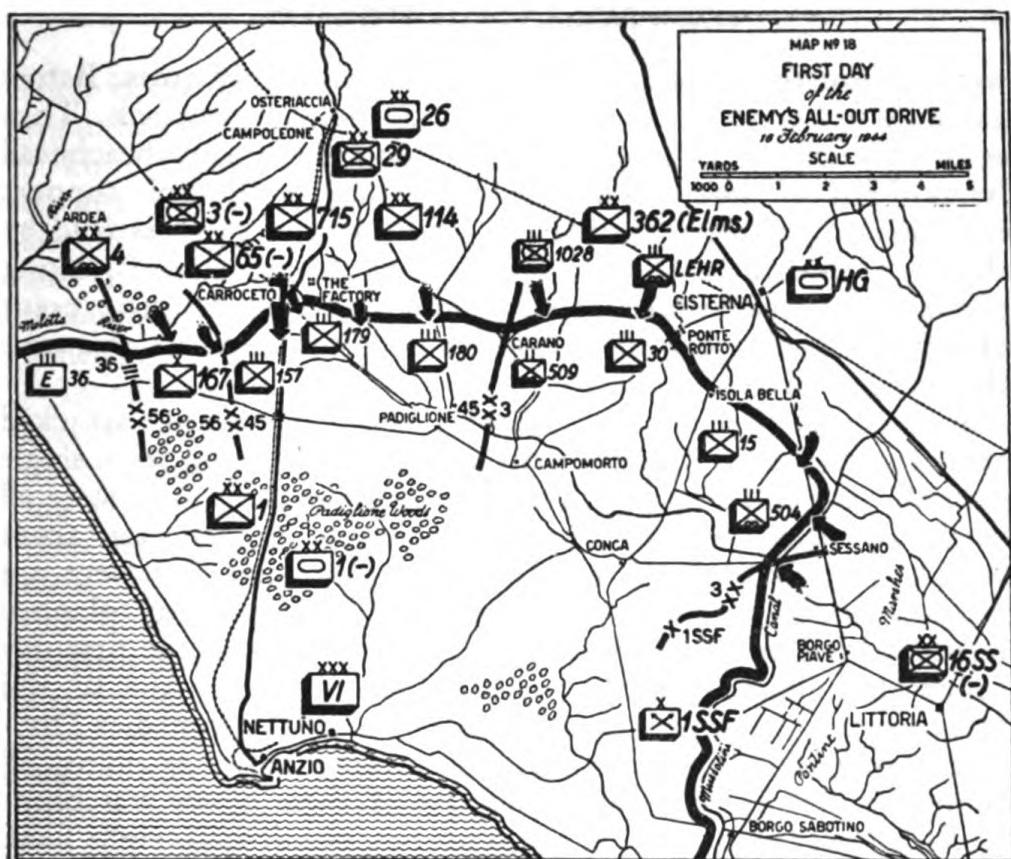
At the same time corps artillery was strengthened by the arrival of the 977th Field Artillery Battalion (155mm gun), and antiaircraft units were built up steadily to aid in combatting the enemy's raids on the harbor area. In air power and artillery VI Corps far surpassed the enemy. There were 432 artillery pieces on the corps front, not including the weapons of the infantry cannon companies. Even with limitations imposed on some types of ammunition, our artillery was firing about 25,000 rounds per day before the arrival of the three field regiments of the 56 Division. Allied destroyers and cruisers thickened the artillery fire almost daily. The enemy artillery fire falling in the harbor and

beachhead areas was estimated by the VI Corps fire control center at not more than 1,500 rounds daily.

The enemy forces, however, were formidable. Even while the fighting in the Factory area was in progress Mackensen was engaged in building up his might and regrouping his units for the all-out effort to drive VI Corps into the sea. As a result the German Fourteenth Army had a more homogeneous battle order than at any time heretofore. The Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute, 362d Grenadier, and elements of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Divisions together with independent regiments and battalions were on the east flank of the beachhead. In the center the 4th Parachute, 26th Panzer, 29th Panzer Grenadier, 65th Grenadier, 114th Light and 715th Grenadier Divisions were all present in a more or less intact condition, although the 65th Grenadier Division lacked the 146th Grenadier Regiment and scarcely any of the enemy units were at full strength. With the addition of the Infantry Lehr Regiment, a demonstration unit from Germany, and the remnants of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment the enemy had the equivalent of six divisions available for the offensive. German armor consisted not only of Mark IV tanks but also of Mark VI Tigers and Mark V Panthers, grouped in the 508th Panzer Battalion and in the tank units of the 26th Panzer and Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Divisions.

The enemy plan of attack in general called for a thrust down the axis of the Albano road by the 114th Light Division on the east, the 715th Grenadier Division in the center, and the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division with troops of the 4th Parachute Division under command on the west. The second phase was to be an exploitation of the breakthrough by the 26th Panzer and 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions. The enemy was sparing neither men nor equipment; he was even using a secret weapon, a squat miniature tank called the "Goliath," loaded with explosives and designed to breach obstacles such as minefields, barbed wire, and concrete walls. By the 12th there were indications the enemy was moving antiaircraft guns forward for use as field artillery, and our reconnaissance planes spotted an increase in rail movements and heavy traffic on all the secondary roads leading from the Rome area to the beachhead. D-day of the enemy's all-out effort to destroy the beachhead was apparently not far off.

The mission and scope of the impending attack were a secret



to no one. Prisoners subsequently taken from the Infantry Lehr Regiment said their mission was to drive through to Anzio, wipe out the beachhead, and return with English and American prisoners to parade through the streets of Berlin. Marshal Kesselring, commanding all German forces in Italy, reviewed the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division before it was committed. German troops were fed exaggerated stories about the size of the attacking force and particularly the mass of tanks available to support them. The enemy was staking everything on the opportunity to win a crushing victory. Allied troops at the beachhead were equally aware that a big attack was forming up. Even the date became known on the afternoon of 15 February, when a prisoner from the 10th Parachute Regiment taken by the 1 DWR (Duke of Wellington's Regiment) reported that the big push would start the next morning.

The drive against the Campoleone salient and the battle for the Factory area had each been initiated by a night attack as small groups of the enemy infiltrated deep into the positions of the 1 Division forward units. For what was to be his major effort, the enemy changed his tactics. Through the night of 15-16 February enemy artillery was unusually quiet, and the enemy units which

were to lead the assault remained in their assembly areas. Before dawn there was no visible evidence of the impending attack. Then at 0600 enemy guns opened up all along the central beachhead front. Half an hour later enemy infantry with tank support were striking at a dozen different points within the area held by the 56, 45th, and 3d Divisions. Although the practice of making diversionary attacks on a broad front to conceal the main point of pressure and to pin down reserves had been retained, this time the enemy relied only on smoke to attack in daylight.

In the 3d Division sector before Cisterna the enemy attacked at no less than six different points with forces ranging from single platoons to two companies, but the diversionary attacks were all costly and unsuccessful. The efforts on the 56 Division front west of the Albano road initially made more gains, but were not pressed. In the 45th Division sector, where the enemy planned to effect his breakthrough to the sea, the attacks on the first day followed the same pattern as those directed against the 3d and 56 Divisions. At approximately 0630 the 715th Grenadier Division with tank support struck simultaneous blows at points all along the division front. The lightest of these blows was borne by the 180th Infantry, which was holding the division right flank along the Carano road; the others were more severe.

The tactical importance of holding the Factory and the overpass at Carroceto became immediately apparent in the attacks launched against the 2d and 3d Battalions, 179th Infantry, located respectively south and southeast of the Factory, and the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, astride the Albano road. From the Factory buildings the enemy could practically look down the throats of the 179th Infantry, and both the Factory and Carroceto provided concealed assembly areas for enemy infantry and tanks. Taking advantage of the network of roads in the area, groups of from four to eight tanks would issue forth from the Factory to pour fire at point-blank range into the foxholes of our troops. When out of ammunition they would withdraw to the Factory, replenish their supply, and return to the attack before our artillery could register on them. Enemy infantry, coordinating their movements with the tanks, worked down La Ficoccia Creek against the 3d Battalion, 179th Infantry, and down Carroceto Creek against the 2d Battalion. During the morning all attacks on the 179th Infantry were beaten off with heavy losses to the enemy, but the pressure kept up throughout the day. Late in the after-

noon it eased, and the troops were given an opportunity to re-organize after slight withdrawals.

The artillery fire preceding the enemy attacks reached its greatest intensity along the front of the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, astride the Albano road. At 0730 the fire lifted, and enemy tanks and infantry struck the battalion. The battle here also lasted throughout the day, but died away toward evening. No deep penetration had been made along the front of the 45th Division.

In addition to laying down preparatory fire for the infantry attacks, the enemy artillery delivered the heaviest counterbattery fire experienced at the beachhead to that date. In the early morning hours the fire was directed at the 45th Division Artillery; then it shifted to the positions of the corps artillery. At the same time a concerted effort was made to keep the highly respected Cub observation planes on the ground. Messerschmitt 109s added to their task of strafing our forward troops the role of pursuing the vulnerable Cubs. At 1000 the 3d Division reported that its observation plane had been shot down and that fighter protection was needed. VI Corps could guarantee no immediate aid, for enemy artillery had ranged in on the Nettuno airstrip and destroyed four planes as they were about to take off. The field had to be abandoned for use even during the daylight hours, and all fighter protection was provided from fields in the Naples area.

Enemy long-range guns and planes concentrated on preventing supplies from entering the port. Bombers attacking at dusk on 15 February sank an LCT and damaged a Liberty ship; on the next day the air raids reached their peak with 19 missions and approximately 172 sorties. The results achieved were not commensurate with the effort expended. An ammunition dump north of Anzio was hit, but otherwise damage was slight. In contrast, XII Air Support Command reported 34 missions and 468 sorties flown in support of VI Corps. The main air effort, which had been planned in support of the New Zealand Corps attack at Cassino, was shifted on short notice to the beachhead. From late morning to dark wave after wave of fighter-bombers, light bombers, and medium bombers swept over the beachhead to attack assembly areas, troop concentrations, and tanks. The emphasis was placed on the 56 and 45th Division fronts, dive bombers and medium bombers striking both the Factory and Carroceto while heavy bombers worked over the communication lines feeding into the Rome area.

At the end of the first day of the big push the enemy had made only slight gains in the sectors of the 45th and 56 Divisions at considerable cost in tanks and personnel. It was evident that most of the attacks were intended as diversions to wear down the strength of the defending troops and to pin reserves. The enemy had not yet committed his main force; this step came on the 17th.

Before midnight on 16 February the enemy resumed the attack down the Albano road. One company of the 725th Grenadier Regiment worked around both flanks of Company E, 157th Infantry, astride the road, while a second company infiltrated directly into the positions of the company. During the night the enemy slowly wiped out the forward positions from the front and rear, forcing the remnants of Company E into a small area around the command post. Here three tanks of the 191st Tank Battalion assisted them in holding out. At 0500, behind a protective screen of smoke and high-explosive shells laid down by the artillery and with the aid of the Shermans, which fought off four enemy tanks closing in from the flanks, what was left of Company E—a total of 14 men—and four men of Company H withdrew to the west of the main road. The 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, also under pressure during the night, sent a platoon west to gain contact with the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, but without success. A dangerous gap was opening up between the two regiments.

The enemy lost no time in exploiting the tactical advantage he had won by his successful night attack. Striking swiftly and in force, he worked to deepen and widen the salient he had created along the Albano road. At 0740 an estimated 35 Focke-Wulf 190s and Messerschmitt 109s bombed and strafed the 45th Division front line. A few minutes later both the 2d and 3d Battalions, 179th Infantry, were under attack by a powerful force composed of the whole of the 725th Grenadier Regiment, two battalions of the 145th Grenadier Regiment, and part of the 741st Grenadier Regiment. During the day approximately 60 tanks, employed in small groups, supported the enemy infantry.

On the east one force of tanks and infantry moved southeast from the Factory to attack the 3d Battalion along the north-south road 2000 yards to the east of the Albano road; a second force on the west, after driving south from Carroceto along the highway, swung east through the former positions of Company E,

157th Infantry, to strike the 2d Battalion in the flank. Company G, which had been under attack most of the night, was virtually isolated by this thrust. Its left flank exposed, the regiment at 0855 ordered the 2d and 3d Battalions to withdraw 1000 yards to the west branch of Carroceto Creek. (See Map 19.) Under cover of a smoke screen the 2d Battalion attempted to extricate itself from its untenable position. Company G was virtually destroyed; Companies E and F, supported by Company A, were unable to form a line until they had fallen back to the dead-end road running east from the Albano road hardly 1500 yards north of the final beachhead line. At 1040 35 Focke-Wulf 190s and 8 Messerschmitt 109s were over again, bombing and strafing. One bomb struck the 3d Battalion command post, knocking out all communication lines. Tank destroyers and infantry fought desperately to hold off the Mark IV and heavy Mark VI Tiger tanks and to prevent the enemy infantry from infiltrating through their positions. At noon, when the 3d Battalion was ordered to drop back to tie in with the 2d Battalion north of the lateral road, the next road south of the dead-end road, the enemy had succeeded in driving a wedge two and one-half miles wide and over a mile deep in the center of the 45th Division front.

To aid the hard-pressed infantry VI Corps brought to bear all the resources of its greatly superior artillery and air power. In addition to the 432 guns representing corps and divisional artillery and three companies of tanks from the 1st Armored Division, four batteries of 90mm antiaircraft guns were employed on ground targets, and two cruisers assisted with fire on the flank of the beachhead. All the resources of XII Air Support Command were put at the disposal of VI Corps. Counting only bombers, 198 fighter-bomber, 176 medium-bomber, 69 light-bomber, and 288 heavy-bomber sorties were flown in direct support of VI Corps. The heavy B-17 Flying Fortresses and B-24 Liberators and the Mitchell and Marauder medium bombers concentrated on Campoleone and on targets up the Albano road. Striking closer to the front lines, fighter-bombers blasted the already battered Factory, Carroceto, and the overpass; and during the hours of darkness armed reconnaissance planes and Wellington bombers patrolled all roads leading into the beachhead. The total weight of bombs dropped (about 1100 tons) and the number of heavy bombers employed was the greatest up to that date ever allotted in direct support of an army.

During the afternoon the enemy attempted to broaden and deepen the salient he had won. Fresh troops, consisting of the Infantry Lehr Regiment reinforced by the 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, were committed to bring the total force involved to approximately 14 infantry battalions. In most instances the attacks were made by small battle groups of battalion strength which were rotated frequently to keep fresh troops in the attack while units battered by our intense artillery fire were withdrawn to be reorganized. The main pressure continued to be exerted down the Albano road and to the east of it against the 2d and 3d Battalions, 179th Infantry. Tanks and infantry penetrated as far as the junction with the dead-end road, where they dug in. Two tanks broke through to the overpass along the Albano road before they were stopped. On the west side of the highway the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, was almost surrounded by small groups of enemy infantry infiltrating through the deep ravines lying between the battalion and the 167 Brigade to the left. In the afternoon contact with the battalion was lost when the regimental command post was bombed; upon the restoration of communications the battalion reported that it was still intact. On the right shoulder of the salient Company G, 180th Infantry, extended its left flank to maintain contact with Company K, 179th Infantry, and held its exposed position despite constant pressure. The enemy's efforts to widen the salient so far had failed, but an attempt by Companies H and I, 1st Armored Regiment, to regain the lost ground in the afternoon was unavailing.

The enemy penetration down the Albano road had brought him dangerously near the final beachhead line of defense. In order to relieve some of the pressure on the 45th Division and to add depth to the defense, General Lucas assigned to the 1 Division (less the 3 Brigade, which remained in corps reserve) the task of holding a two-mile sector of the final beachhead line of defense extending east and west from the overpass on the Albano road. The 1 Division was tied in with the 56 Division on its left and with the 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, on its right. Corps also attached the 2d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, to the 45th Division. The battalion was placed under control of the 157th Infantry and moved up to the overpass in position to relieve the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry. The 56 Division strengthened its 167 Brigade with elements of the 168 Brigade which had been employed successfully that morning to wipe out the wedge the

enemy had driven into the division line the previous day. These shifts of units were accompanied by changes in personnel. General Templer of the 56 Division took command of both the 56 and 1 Divisions when General Penney was wounded by a shell fragment. General Truscott left the 3d Division to become Deputy Commander of VI Corps, his former position being filled by Brig. Gen. John W. O'Daniel.

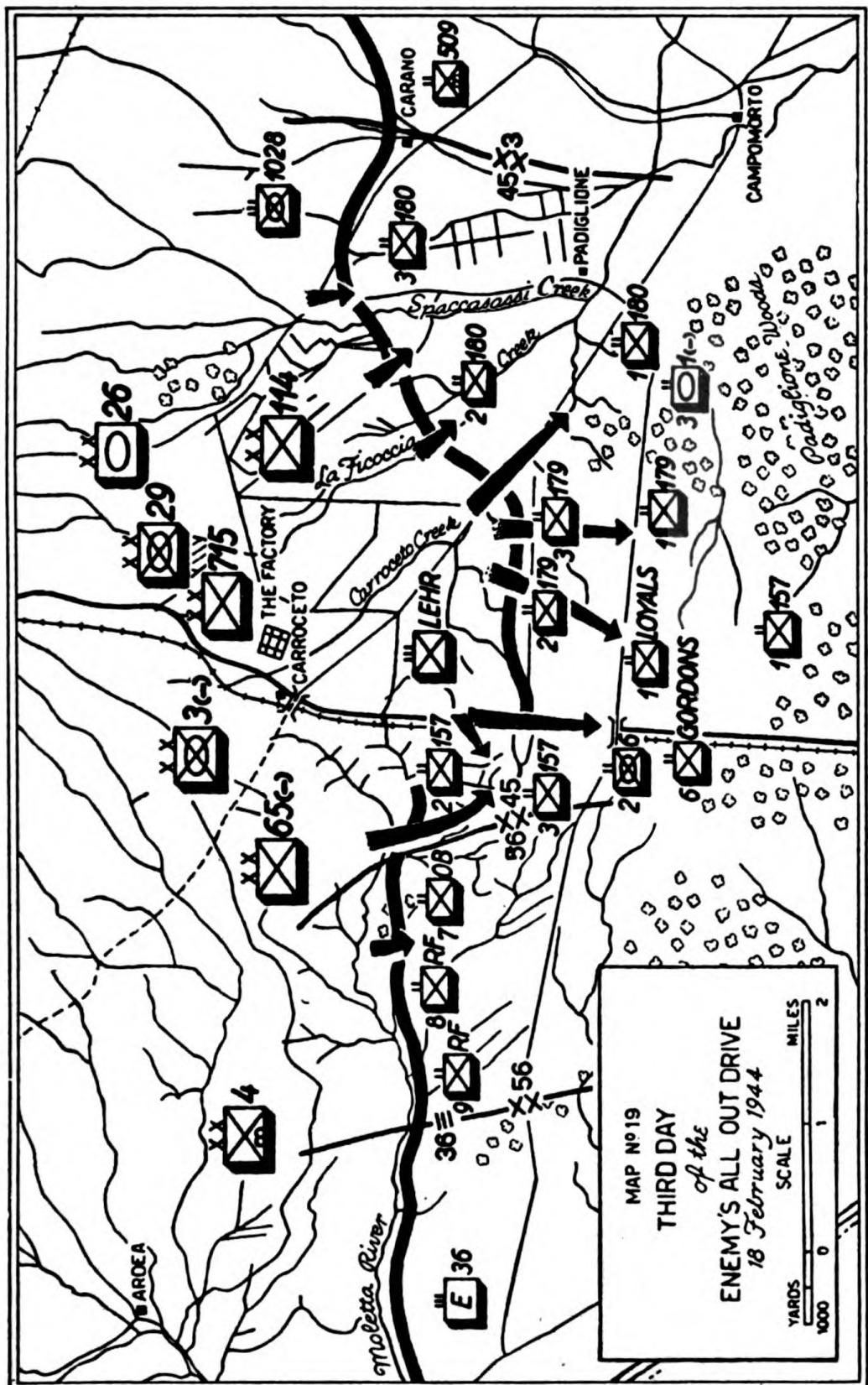
In an effort to lessen the depth of the enemy penetration and to obtain a more defensible line, General Eagles ordered the 2d and 3d Battalions, 179th Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry, to launch a counterattack on the night of 17-18 February to reach the west branch of Carroceto Creek and a parallel position on the Albano road. The two depleted battalions of the 179th Infantry jumped off on schedule at 2300; the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry, was hampered by lack of communication between units and by pressure from the enemy and did not get under way until 0030. The enemy had already brought up machine guns and consolidated his gains along the Albano road. The battalion encountered such heavy fire that it got no farther up the highway than the junction with the dead-end road, almost 1000 yards short of its objective. The 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, found its left flank exposed to attack from the west. Momentarily on the defensive, the enemy returned to the attack. Company E was partly cut off by enemy tanks and was forced to begin a withdrawal. To the right Companies K and L reached their objectives, only to find that Company K was in a trap. The situation became confused. Enemy artillery fire knocked out all communication between the 179th Infantry and its battalions, forcing the regiment to rely almost entirely on runners to keep abreast of the situation. The counterattack had failed. It lacked sufficient strength to throw the enemy off balance, and it left the troops of the 179th Infantry in an exposed position.

All through the night the enemy moved up units in preparation for a resumption of the offensive while employing his customary tactics of infiltrating small groups under cover of darkness. Special attention was paid to the shoulders of the salient. On the left enemy units, pushing up the ravines which drain into the Moletta River, got between the 167 Brigade and the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, and cut the battalion's supply route. On the right Companies G and F, holding the left flank of the 180th Infantry, were harassed by enemy tanks operating along the north-

south road and by enemy infantry slipping into their positions. Hostile artillery fire worked over the units holding the final beachhead line. Behind this screen of activity the enemy prepared for what was to be the major effort to effect a breakthrough. During the day he was to employ all of the 721st, 741st, and 735th Grenadier Regiments, the crack Infantry Lehr Regiment, and the 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. Armor continued to be used in small groups but on a more extensive scale than on any previous day. Each infantry unit had tank support, and in the afternoon, when elements of the 26th Panzer Division were committed, tanks were employed in groups of as many as 12.

The enemy launched his first thrust at dawn. Capitalizing on the confusion resulting from the night infiltration and the unsuccessful counterattack, he thrust deep into the positions of the 179th Infantry. Company K was virtually destroyed, and only remnants of the 3d Battalion reached the final beachhead line. Enemy tanks moved down the diagonal road running past Padiglione until they were stopped by a blown bridge; enemy infantry infiltrating to the south and southeast reached the positions of the 1 Loyals east of the overpass and of both the 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, and the 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, along the final beachhead line. These initial attacks, which were not in great strength, were beaten off. The 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, almost cut off by tank penetrations on its left and by the collapse of the 3d Battalion on its right, withdrew under the covering fire of Company A. By the middle of the morning the 179th Infantry had been driven back to the positions marking the final beachhead line. To its right the 2d Battalion, 180th Infantry, was under attack from three sides by enemy tanks operating along the roads east of the Factory. Companies F and G at 0625 were ordered to withdraw 1000 yards to the east. Company F and a platoon of Company G extricated themselves; the remainder of Company G never received the order. Completely surrounded, the company fought off every enemy effort to overrun it. On the other shoulder of the salient the beleaguered 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, cut off from all support, likewise held. Although the enemy had widened his penetration and had driven it 1000 yards deeper into the positions of the 45th Division, the courage and staying power of our infantry still stood in the way of a breakthrough.

The bloody struggle continued all morning under an overcast sky which prevented a repetition of the previous day's tre-



mendous program of air support. Fighter-bombers, which flew 120 sorties, gave effective close support against enemy tanks and infantry, and 24 light bombers covered the Factory area with fragmentation bombs. Medium and heavy bombers were unable to get off the ground. There was, however, no reduction in the amount of artillery fire which fell on the attacking troops. Many of the artillery ground observers became casualties or had their radios and telephones shot out, but the enemy's efforts to keep down the Cub observation planes failed. Enemy units frequently were decimated and disorganized before they were even in position to attack, yet there seemed to be no end to the waves of enemy infantry thrown against the 45th Division.

At 1400, when Colonel Darby took command of the 179th Infantry, the situation appeared desperate. The shattered 3d Battalion had been withdrawn for reorganization; the 2d Battalion was at less than half strength and was nearly exhausted. Only the 1st Battalion on the final beachhead line was capable of organized resistance. All communication lines between the regiment and its battalions were out, further complicating the task of creating a coordinated defense. The 180th Infantry on the right flank was still largely intact, but its units were holding a long front exposed to enemy tank attacks, and Company G was completely cut off. The enemy's Mark VI tanks could operate almost at will down the Albano road and the diagonal road to Padiglione. A large percentage of the division's antitank guns had been knocked out or overrun during the fighting of the past three days; the tanks of the 191st Tank Battalion and the tank destroyers of the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion had suffered heavy losses while beating off the never-ending succession of enemy tanks. The latter unit alone lost 14 M10s on the 17th. In order to obtain hull defilade it was necessary to dig the tank destroyers into the marshy ground; once in place they were difficult to move, and in some cases they had to be abandoned when the infantry withdrew. In the late afternoon of the 18th, as the enemy prepared to make his heaviest attack of the day, it was questionable whether the final beachhead line could hold.

The enemy attack started with a thrust by 12 tanks down the diagonal road. Only a blown bridge where the road crosses Carroceto Creek kept the tanks from breaking through; strung out along the road, they were able to fire point-blank into the foxholes of Company A, 180th Infantry. Under the cover of this fire the

German infantry attacked. By 1750 the fighting was general along the whole front of the salient as far west as the overpass. Both Company A, 180th Infantry, and the 1st and 2d Battalions, 179th Infantry, held their ground. Small enemy units managed to infiltrate through the area of heavy brush lying along the regimental boundary north of the road; but the penetration was not exploited, and the infiltrating units were wiped out during the night. Farther to the west the 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, and the 1 Loyals were attacked by enemy troops who came in across the open fields south of the dead-end road. For four hours the Germans fought to break through east of the overpass, and at one time they penetrated all the way to the lateral road before they were driven back in hand-to-hand fighting. Our tanks, patrolling the lateral road, helped the infantry to hold off the enemy until the force of the attacks was spent. Compelled to advance across open country, the enemy was taking terrific casualties from artillery, mortar, and machine-gun fire. Even the highly trained Infantry Lehr Regiment proved unable to achieve a breakthrough. At 2130 there was evidence that the enemy was pulling back to reorganize; never again was he to come so close to rolling up the final beachhead line established by Fifth Army troops.

## 6. THE TIDE TURNS

19-20 February 1944

During the night of 18-19 February the 45th Division took advantage of the temporary lull in the enemy attacks to strengthen its positions by the use of all available men. VI Corps assembled a counterattack force. The atmosphere of confusion and desperation which had marked the fighting during the late afternoon hours of the 18th changed to a spirit of confidence as an integrated line of defense was reestablished and communication between units restored. The enemy attacks before dawn on the 19th penetrated at one point in the 1 Loyals sector to the lateral road, but the 1 Loyals and the 179th Infantry stood firm. During the morning enemy tanks tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to operate down the Albano road. Destroyers of the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion knocked out two Mark VI Tigers and five Mark IVs. At noon the enemy tried a final infantry attack down the same axis, only to have it effectively broken up by artillery fire before any contact had been made. Although there was an increase in the

enemy air effort over the previous day, marked by repeated dive-bombing and strafing raids over the forward lines, it was becoming evident that the peak of the enemy offensive had been passed.

Early on the 19th VI Corps launched a strong counterattack by Force H under General Harmon, consisting of the 6th Armored Infantry (less the 2d Battalion), the 30th Infantry, a battalion of medium tanks, and supporting artillery. This force was to drive northwest up the diagonal road running past Padiglione while the 169 Brigade (Force T) pushed north on the east of the Albano road, the two to meet and so pinch off the enemy troops in the nose of the salient. The 169 Brigade, which had just landed, could not get its equipment in time for the attack, but Force H jumped off behind heavy artillery and air support as scheduled at 0630, 19 February. By afternoon it had driven some 2000 yards into the enemy lines and caused much confusion. During the afternoon the 1 Loyals and a company of the 2 North Staffs, supported by tanks of the 46 Royal Tanks, wiped out the pocket of resistance along the lateral road left by the enemy's penetration in the morning.

The decline in the size of the forces, both infantry and tanks, which the enemy employed in his attacks on the morning of the 19th, the large number and variety of units represented by the prisoners taken in the counterattacks, and above all the picture of disorganization within units and the spirit of disillusionment exhibited by the enemy prisoners indicated that VI Corps had by the evening of 19 February won its battle for the defense of the beachhead. Since the enemy had already committed elements of the 26th Panzer and 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions, which he had intended to hold in reserve to exploit a breakthrough, it was unlikely that he had any fresh troops left.

The fighting on 20 February only served to buttress the conclusion that we had broken the back of the enemy offensive. According to prisoners from the 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, both the 71st and 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiments were to have attacked at 0400, 19 February. Disrupted communications had caused such confusion in the transmission of orders that the 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment failed to attack until the morning of the 20th. Leaving its assembly area north of the Factory in the early morning hours, the 1st Battalion of the regiment had advanced into the no man's land in the center of the salient. Under fire from all directions, the companies grew confused, lost their

bearings, and became hopelessly mixed up. The battalion commander called a halt to reconnoiter. He found that the 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, which was supposed to be on his right, was to his rear; the two connecting companies had been destroyed; and the 3d Battalion of his own regiment had failed to follow up. Left isolated and under terrific artillery fire, the battalion disintegrated. Although the enemy thereafter continued to apply pressure on the shoulders of the salient, the debacle on the morning of 20 February marked a bloody end to his efforts to break through.

The all-out German drive to destroy the Anzio beachhead had started with many advantages. With less than five divisions of troops, many of whom had been in line continuously for nearly a month, VI Corps was forced to defend a front of nearly 35 miles and at the same time maintain an adequate reserve. Mackensen, with nearly ten divisions under his command, had the larger force, his troops were fresher, and he could move his reserves at will to exploit any weak point he discovered in the beachhead defenses. Nor were the enemy's artillery and air power negligible factors. By concentrating his artillery fire on the area around the salient he was able to subject the troops under attack to a merciless pounding, and the congested area of the beachhead offered an excellent target for his bombers. In spite of these advantages he had failed. The reasons were several: Allied superiority in artillery and air-power, the inability of the enemy to employ his tanks in masses, the failure of his secret weapon (the Goliath), the breakdown of enemy morale, and finally the stubborn resistance of the Allied troops holding the beachhead.

Prisoners taken during the battle almost invariably commented on the "terrific" and "continuous" artillery fire on our part, which caused heavy casualties, shattered nerves, ruined morale, and brought some units to the verge of panic. Often attacking troops were completely cut off from their support; communication between units was dependent almost entirely on radio and on runners, many of whom never lived to deliver their messages; and in some cases, as a result of the breakdown of supply services, units went for days without food. For every shell the enemy artillery fired, VI Corps threw back from 20 to 30. The salient the enemy had driven into the 45th Division front became a veritable death trap for his tanks and infantry.

The Allied air bombing and artillery fire served to complement each other. An appreciable share of the responsibility for the

breakdown of communications and the failure of supplies to reach forward units was due to the weight of bombs dropped along the axis of the Albano road from the Factory and Carroceto back to Colli Laziali. Straining his reserves to the utmost, the enemy was able to fly an estimated total of 172 sorties on 16 February, the peak day of his performance. The next day 288 Allied heavy bombers alone were over the beachhead, and whereas the number of enemy sorties steadily declined the Allied air effort was curtailed only by bad weather and lack of targets.

Many prisoners attributed their failure to lack of tank support. This was due partly to losses suffered during the fighting, but more largely to unfavorable tank terrain. Enemy tanks, as well as ours, were roadbound and consequently could be employed only in small groups. In some cases the lead tank and rear tank of a column were knocked out, blocking the escape of the remainder, and wherever tanks were used in groups of more than two or three they made excellent targets for our artillery. At no time did tanks prove a crucial factor in the final result of the battle.

The morale of the enemy troops declined rapidly as the attack bogged down. They had been promised an easy victory. The 29th Panzer Grenadier Division went into battle in high spirits. The troops had heard rumors that large numbers of Allied prisoners had been taken, that the attack was progressing favorably, that for once the German air force would not be busy on another front, and that they would be able to fight with tanks again. When they were subjected to our bombing and arrived on the front in the midst of what a prisoner called "carnage," they lost all desire to continue the attack. They felt they had been deceived, and their morale suffered accordingly. Conversely, the fighting spirit of the individual Allied soldier played an important part in the successful defense of the beachhead. During the dark hours of 18 February, when the enemy infantry seemed to be infiltrating everywhere, when communications broke down, and when whole companies and battalions were cut off, it was the will to win of the Allied troops which gave them the strength to hold and at the critical moment to counterattack. The transition from offensive to defensive fighting was not easy for our troops, accustomed to doing the attacking; and in the early days of February our officers and men had to learn many lessons the hard way—but they learned.

An accurate estimate of the losses suffered by the enemy is not

possible. Unquestionably they were extremely high both in personnel and in equipment. The German High Command never hesitated to sacrifice troops to achieve an important objective, and the wiping out of the Anzio beachhead had become as much a question of prestige as of military strategy. It was only after his reserves had been committed and his troops were too exhausted and disorganized to continue a coordinated drive that Mackensen paused. The successful battle fought by the Allied troops to hold their beachhead was won at a price which was almost certainly lower than that paid by the enemy for his failure. It was still high enough to strain the already depleted units of VI Corps to the utmost. On 20 February, in spite of a steady flow of replacements, the effective strength of the units at the beachhead was 20,000 less than the authorized strength. Battle casualties for the period 16-20 February totalled 404 killed, 1,982 wounded, and 1,025 missing or captured. Exposure, exhaustion, and particularly trench foot resulting from days spent in water-logged foxholes resulted in a total of 1,637 non-battle casualties. Though high, the losses suffered by VI Corps would not have been serious had it been possible to draw the troops out of line for a period of recuperation. During February there were no quiet periods at the beachhead. Every man was needed, and the steady drain on the lives and energy of the defending troops never ceased. In the next five days, 21-25 February, the beachhead force suffered the loss of an additional 231 killed, 1,304 wounded, and 1,517 missing. In some cases the casualties reported for this last period were directly related to the big attack, but they are also an indication that the enemy, if badly mauled, was still capable of offensive action.

## 7. THE FINAL ENEMY DRIVE

20 February-4 March 1944

Mackensen waited until the night of 28 February to launch what was to be his last serious effort to crack the final beachhead line of defense. In the intervening period, while he rested and regrouped his forces for the new offensive, he continued to apply pressure to both shoulders of the salient he had driven into the 45th Division line. VI Corps was kept busy fighting off these small but costly attacks, reorganizing the units which had suffered most heavily during the main offensive, and strengthening its defenses.

On the east flank of the enemy salient the 180th Infantry beat off minor enemy attacks on 20-22 February, which were accompanied by the heaviest artillery fire experienced at the beachhead. The 3d Division took over 1500 yards of the 45th Division front on the 22d. On the left shoulder the 1 Division relieved the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry, and the 2d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, in positions north of the overpass and west of the Albano road; and the 2/7 Queens of the 56 Division took the place of the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, on the nights of 21-22 February. The 2d Battalion had held its positions west of the Albano road throughout the enemy offensive, though surrounded for the greater part of the period. As squads and platoons were cut off one by one, the battalion was finally reduced from its original 2000-yard front to a small area 600 yards west of the highway where a series of caves provided a natural fortress. In the relief the 2d Battalion had to fight its way out; only 225 men escaped, and of this number 90 were hospital cases. After a week of almost continuous artillery fire some men had lost their hearing; others were barely able to walk. That any returned was a tribute to the courage and stamina of the men who made "the battle of the caves" an epic of defensive fighting.

The enemy continued his attacks in this area after the 2/7 Queens had taken over, and by the night of the 23d had wiped out the new garrison of the caves. In the rough gully country west of the Albano road a continuous line of defenses was impossible, and whole squads and platoons would disappear without leaving a trace. The 56 Division reported on 25 February that its 167 Brigade was only at 35 percent of effective strength, the 168 Brigade at 50 percent, and the 169 Brigade, which had seen no action before 20 February, was down to 45 percent, not counting the 2/7 Queens, which had been reduced to 15 percent during its part in the battle of the caves. The 1 Division was in equally bad shape, and only the arrival of the 18 Brigade on the 25th prevented the problem of British replacements from becoming critical. As far as possible, however, all of the weary units on the Albano road rotated their men in the front so as to give some rest.

In his regrouping of 20-28 February the enemy received the equivalent of a division in fresh troops and replacements. The shifts of troops indicated that the enemy had split his forces for a dual offensive, the major attack to be launched from Cisterna

against the 3d Division and a secondary attack on the west side of the Albano road against the 56 and 1 Divisions. VI Corps, under General Truscott's command from 23 February, made its preparations accordingly, and was ready when the enemy began his attack against the British at dawn on 28 February. German success west of the Albano road was very limited and was not pressed.

In the afternoon the enemy laid down a smoke screen along General O'Daniel's front, apparently to conceal last-minute troop movements in preparation for the attack against the 3d Division. After midnight enemy artillery, which had been concentrating on the British sector, shifted its fire to the east, paying special attention to the area around the village of Carano. VI Corps, anticipating an attack on the 3d Division, had matched the shift of enemy guns to the east flank by moving the 27th and 91st Armored Field Artillery Battalions to the vicinity of Conca, where they could thicken the fire of the 3d Division Artillery. At 0430 corps and division artillery responded to the enemy fire with a counterpreparation lasting for an hour and covering the whole of the beachhead line. Before dawn enemy infantry began infiltrating the positions of Company B, 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, northeast of Carano and Company G, 15th Infantry, near Isola Bella. Then the action spread to points all along the eastern half of the beachhead, including the sectors of the 504th Parachute Infantry and the 1st Special Service Force. Instead of concentrating his forces the enemy attacked with battalion and company-size units at as many as six different points within the 3d Division sector. His intention appeared to be to drive the 3d Division back to the Mussolini Canal and then reorganize for a breakthrough. If such was his plan, it failed.

At the end of the first day of his offensive the enemy had hardly dented the outer line of defenses of the 3d Division. His tactics of attacking with small units on a wide front, probably dictated by the open nature of the terrain and respect for the VI Corps superiority in artillery, had broken down against the well organized positions of the 3d Division troops. The 362d Grenadier and 26th Panzer Divisions, together with the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division, had lost 361 prisoners and many more dead and wounded. Enemy armor, though more successful than the infantry, was hampered by our minefields and by its inability to operate off the roads. Employed in small groups, the enemy

tanks and self-propelled guns lacked the power necessary to achieve a breakthrough, and they made good targets for the emplaced tanks and tank destroyers of VI Corps. In the course of the day 21 enemy tanks were reported knocked out.

The pattern of the enemy attacks on 1 March followed closely that of the preceding day, but on a reduced scale; their effectiveness was lessened by the vigorous counterattack of the 2d Battalion, 30th Infantry, during the previous night, which wiped out some penetrations of the 1028th Panzer Grenadier Regiment in the sector of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion east of Carano. The principal German thrust, against the 7th Infantry west of Ponte Rotto, failed to gain ground. Action on the 2d and 3d was limited; and on the afternoon of the 3d the 3d Division counterattacked in the Isola Bella and Ponte Rotto areas to regain all lost positions. On 2 March clear weather had permitted an extensive air program on Carroceto, Velletri, and Cisterna; the total of 351 heavy bombers was even greater than that of 17 February, the peak day in the air support given to VI Corps during Mackensen's all-out drive to destroy the beachhead.

On 4 March the German Fourteenth Army admitted failure by issuing an order to its units instructing them to hold their present positions and to develop them defensively as quickly as possible. Thereafter two divisions, the 29th Panzer Grenadier and the 26th Panzer, were withdrawn into general reserve between Anzio and the southern front, ready for switching to either sector. In early March the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division left for Leghorn for rest and refitting, preparatory to an expected move to France. Elements of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division present at the beachhead were also withdrawn to north Italy. The 114th Light Division left the lines in early March for a rest period and then reappeared on the Eighth Army front. By the end of March the containing force around Anzio had been reduced by over four divisions; his best troops withdrawn, the enemy then faced VI Corps with only five divisions plus three infantry regiments, a force probably inferior in strength to the troops under General Truscott.<sup>2</sup>

Regrouping also took place on our side in March in preparation for an eventual resumption of the offensive. During 5-11 March the 5 Division from 10 Corps relieved the 56 Division, which had been rushed to Anzio in the critical period of mid-February; the 56 Division prepared to leave Italy for the Middle East. The

24 Guards Brigade, which had suffered severely in the fierce fighting around the Factory, was replaced by the 18 Brigade and returned to Naples to reorganize. The 504th Parachute Infantry, long overdue to rejoin the 82d Airborne Division in the United Kingdom, was finally released in late March. The 9 and 40 Royal Marine Commandos and the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion also left the beachhead. Partly to offset these losses the veteran 34th Division came to the beachhead and on 28 March relieved the 3d Division before Cisterna, after the latter had completed 67 consecutive days in the line. At the end of March VI Corps combat units at the beachhead totalled five infantry divisions and an armored division less one combat command.

Exhausted by forty days of almost constant fighting, neither the enemy nor VI Corps was in position to do more than rest its troops and prepare for the next active phase. In accordance with the Fourteenth Army order of 4 March the enemy, certain of another Allied offensive, began intensive work on defenses to contain our forces. Within the beachhead VI Corps maintained its aggressive defense, while preparing for an eventual resumption of the march on Rome. After the last German attempt to reduce the beachhead had died out, there ensued a period of stalemate at Anzio marked by nightly raids and patrol clashes, the constant exchange of harassing fire, and continued air attacks. By the end of March VI Corps had definitely regained the initiative at Anzio.

The gradual disintegration of the enemy's last drive to push VI Corps into the sea served as a fitting epilogue to a month of fighting as bitterly contested and costly in lives as any experienced in the Italian campaign. The enemy had started his offensive in a spirit of confidence and with the determination to make any sacrifice necessary to victory. He had drawn upon his dwindling reserves in north Italy, France, Yugoslavia, and Germany to build up an effective striking force. Then he attacked. His first drive, designed to pave the way for the breakthrough, was launched with skill and aggressiveness, and he won his objectives. In the period 3-10 February the Campoleone salient was wiped out, and the Factory and Carroceto were taken. Only the time required and the expenditure of troops were greater than he anticipated. Still confident, he had massed his troops for the blow which he expected would carry his armor and infantry through to the sea. For four days, 16-19 February, he threw wave after wave of infantry into the battle in a desperate effort to achieve success. The

beachhead line of defense bent, but it failed to break. Although the enemy attempted to continue the pressure and to pour more troops into the battle, he was unable to make up his losses or to restore the confidence of his troops. His attacks during the last drive, 29 February-4 March, showed both timidity and lack of coordination. The enemy's efforts to win a victory which would bolster flagging morale at home and restore the reputation of the German Army abroad had broken down against the stubborn resistance of the Allied troops holding the beachhead; they had brought him only a further depletion of his already strained resources in equipment and manpower.

## 8. SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE BEACHHEAD

The role of defensive fighting forced upon VI Corps at the beachhead was something new and foreign to the experience of our troops in Italy, for in the past Fifth Army had been constantly on the offensive. Our infantry troops, in particular, had had little experience in planning defensive positions, stringing barbed wire, laying minefields, and handling demolitions. Engineer troops, trained for this work, were at a premium. During February a large percentage of corps and division engineers was employed as infantry troops, either to hold front-line positions or as reserves. Even when utilized only in a supervisory capacity on defense works the supply of trained engineers was inadequate. There were other difficulties. Due to the relatively level nature of the beachhead terrain and the enemy's superior observation, all work had to be done at night; it was often necessary to work under heavy artillery fire; and with each breach made in the lines by enemy attacks new defenses were necessary.

To provide protection against enemy infantry attacks stress was laid on the development of self-sustaining, mutually supporting centers of resistance. The stone-walled Italian farmhouses scattered over the countryside frequently provided the kernel for these strongpoints, which were protected by wire and anti-personnel mines. Antipersonnel mines and booby traps were used sparingly while the front remained fluid as they frequently were the source of casualties to our own troops. They proved most effective laid in conjunction with wire obstacles and to block the ravines and ditches used by the enemy when infiltrating our positions. Construction of field defenses was hampered by the

high water table which was characteristic of the drained swamp land of the beachhead. It was generally impossible to dig deep dugouts and foxholes and keep them dry. Sandbags were used in huge quantities to build up positions above ground level and to provide revetments against the sandy soil. As time permitted, dugouts were provided with overhead cover, communication trenches were completed, and strongpoints were interconnected. The expenditure of engineer supplies was extremely high. During February, for example, the 120th Engineer Battalion (45th Division) issued 5,000 rolls of concertina wire, 151 rolls of barbed wire, and 128,465 sandbags.

To provide the strongpoints with the capacity to hold out when isolated by enemy attacks, VI Corps ordered that within each company and battery line position a dump of rations and ammunition sufficient for five days be maintained. Each day units drew sufficient supplies to replace the expenditure of the past twenty-four hours. During the enemy's all-out offensive, when many units were overrun or forced to fall back rapidly, the system resulted in the loss of supplies. These losses, however, were more than compensated in the case of units such as the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, which managed to go on fighting long after its supply routes had been cut.

Passive antitank defenses consisted principally of minefields and road blocks. On the 3d Division front the 10th Engineer Battalion laid 22,109 antitank mines in February and March. The task of laying minefields at night in the open, often featureless terrain resulted at first in many improperly marked fields. The practice was finally adopted of first marking a field, then recording it, and only after these two steps were completed laying the mines. Since enemy tanks were largely confined to the roads, road craters were used extensively and with success. In addition, bridges were either blown or prepared for demolition and guarded by engineer troops. To improve the west branch of the Mussolini Canal as an obstacle, the water level was raised by the construction of earth dams, and barbed wire was laid below the surface.

Where possible, antitank guns were located on reverse slopes to provide flanking fires. They were supplemented by tank destroyers and tanks. Tank destroyers were used well forward in dug-in positions and as a mobile reserve, thereby strengthening and adding depth to the antitank defense. Tanks also were placed

well forward on a scale of approximately one tank company to a regiment in the line. This practice violated the principle of employing tanks in masses, but their usefulness as anti-tank guns and in bolstering the morale of the front-line troops outweighed the loss of mobility and dispersion of strength. Both tanks and tank destroyers frequently directed artillery fire with excellent results. In addition to the normal allotment of bazookas and antitank grenades, infantry troops were equipped with British sticky grenades, Molotov cocktails, and flame throwers.

Although the small size of the beachhead and the relatively fixed nature of the front line resulted in reduced distance between the command posts of the various echelons, the quantity of signal wire necessary to maintain communications was, if anything, increased. Enemy artillery fire repeatedly cut the wires, and command posts themselves were frequently knocked out by bombing or shelling. Wire crews partially solved this problem by laying double and triple communications lines, plowing under the wire, and establishing alternate switchboards. Communications improved rapidly during March as the quantity of enemy artillery fire tapered off and the front was stabilized.

Under the direction of the corps engineer the work of developing and improving the defenses went on continuously through the months of February and March. At the end of the period the beachhead was protected by a cordon of strong and well integrated defenses in depth. The emphasis then shifted from the development of the defenses to the equally important problem of maintaining the fighting efficiency of the beachhead forces.

Heavy casualties during the attacks of January and February and constant attrition during the period of stalemate caused the replacement problem to assume major significance at the beachhead. When the 3d Division lost heavily in the attack on Cisterna, 2,500 replacements were rushed to Anzio to restore the battle strength of the division. Similar emergency measures were taken when the 45th Division was hard hit in the February offensive. To keep units up to strength during this crucial period Anzio was given first priority on replacements, and men in replacement depots were shipped on arrival. The absorption, however, of large numbers of troops who had had no combat experience was difficult for units which were almost constantly in the line and often fighting desperately to hold their positions; the losses among the new men, moreover, were unduly high until they became battle-

wise. Both at Cassino and at Anzio the replacement system thus far had resulted in undue losses, the slow weakening of good outfits in the line, and the bulk reception of new men who needed extensive training in too brief a time. Diminished losses during the period of stalemate and the arrival of a greatly increased flow of replacements from the United States eased the manpower problem and permitted more adequate training of the new men. By 23 May, when the beachhead was finally broken, 17,848 men had been returned from hospitals to units at Anzio and 18,849 replacements dispatched. The 3d Division alone had received 14,165 and the 45th Division 11,202.

With the entire beachhead under constant enemy artillery fire and air attack, personnel at the beachhead were under a severe strain. Front-line troops, dug in along the almost level plain, had little concealment from enemy observation. They had to stay underground during daylight hours, and even at the rear there were no areas safe from shelling. During the critical weeks of February troops were forced to remain in line for long periods of time without relief and often in foxholes half-filled with water. Non-battle casualties, especially from exposure and trenchfoot, were heavy during the cold and rainy weather of late winter.

Special efforts were made to keep up the fighting spirit of the beachhead troops. To counter the debilitating effect of defensive warfare, constant patrolling and aggressive small-unit actions were stressed. No troops could be relieved during the critical February period, but as soon as the front was stabilized 750 men every four days were sent by LST shuttle to the Fifth Army rest center at Caserta, and the 3d Division set up its own rest center in the southeast sector of the beachhead. Troops at Anzio were given priority on mail, post-exchange supplies, and recreation equipment. By these means the troops were kept fit for the resumption of the offensive.

The confined area of the beachhead and the lack of distinction between the front line and rear areas were nowhere more clearly evident than in the district northeast of the Nettuno air-strip where the American evacuation hospitals were located. For almost 17 weeks medical personnel gave aid and comfort to the sick and wounded in an area only a few miles from the enemy's artillery and so close to the harbor and other military targets that it was constantly subject to air bombardment as well as to shelling.<sup>3</sup> At the end of March, when the ground began to dry out,

the hospitals were placed three and one-half feet below the surface to protect the patients. As far as possible the wounded were evacuated to the Naples area. Air evacuation, however, could not be used until our breakout in May because the dust raised by the planes in landing or taking off from the airstrip invited German shelling. Evacuation by sea was complicated by shallow beaches, stormy weather, and constant enemy shelling. Since the hospital ships could not dock at the wharf, they received casualties from the shore by means of LCTs. Storm and high seas frequently interrupted this method of evacuation, and LSTs were necessarily often used, despite the resultant 30-hour trip to the base hospitals. Nevertheless, in the period 22 January-22 May, 23,860 American casualties and 9,203 British casualties—33,063 in all—were successfully evacuated by sea.

With the arrival of warmer weather came the danger of malaria. The Pontine Marshes adjacent to the beachhead are notorious for their high malarial rate. Incessant rains had flooded the low-lying land held by our forces astride the Mussolini Canal, and the Germans to improve their defensive positions destroyed the system of dikes which had formed part of the drainage system for the Pontine Marshes. This was not all. Everywhere in front of and behind the lines artillery fire and bombing had pock-marked the ground with thousands of craters, and water-logged foxholes, dugouts, and abandoned gun emplacements added to the natural breeding grounds. In combatting malaria emphasis was placed first on preventive measures which could be taken by the individual soldier such as the use of headnets, mosquito bars, spray bombs, and insect repellents; secondly, on large-scale drainage projects. A dusting program was carried right into no man's land at night, where static pools were sprayed. These prompt and vigorous measures produced amazing results. The 3d Division surgeon reported that not a single new case of malaria developed among replacements who came to his division from malaria-free bases. Yet the 3d Division occupied the sector of the beachhead most likely to produce new malaria cases.

A major feature of the military activity on the Anzio beachhead was the unusually heavy concentration of German artillery. During the attacks of February German artillery was employed mostly in support of the enemy infantry; in the period of stalemate its role became defensive. Most of the enemy artillery was moved from the central beachhead sector to better protected

positions along the stream gullies between Ardea and Campoleone west of the Albano road. Medium and heavy guns switched to a program of harassing rear areas and counterbattery fire. For his shelling of the vulnerable beach and port areas and of the trunk roads leading out of Anzio the enemy employed 170mm rifles with a range of 32,000 yards, 210mm railway guns, and even 280mm railway guns known to our troops as the Anzio Express. The amount of enemy shelling during March indicated that the Germans were not withholding ammunition for an assault but were taking advantage of their superior positions to inflict as heavy casualties as possible.

VI Corps artillery took elaborate measures to counter the enemy fire. A highly centralized corps counterbattery system was developed. Enemy counterbattery was met by dispersion of guns and probable targets, digging in, careful concealment and camouflage of positions and observation posts, and the use of dummy positions. Quick warning of enemy aircraft was provided for the artillery observation planes, vital in the level, featureless terrain of the beachhead, and "islands of safety" defended by anti-aircraft guns were established for them. P-40 and P-47 fighter-bombers bombed enemy gun positions with heavy 1000- and 500-pound bombs and clusters of 20-pound fragmentation bombs on every day suitable for flying. At the end of March the 194th Field Artillery Battalion (8-inch howitzers) was brought to the beachhead with the primary mission of demolishing houses employed by the enemy as observation posts and strongpoints. Naval gunfire by cruisers and destroyers, using air observation, was also employed with good results. In April two 8-inch guns with a range of 35,000 yards and a battery of 240mm howitzers from the 698th Field Artillery Battalion were dispatched to the beachhead.

With the establishment of the Anzio beachhead Fifth Army antiaircraft artillery faced its first major test in the Italian campaign. The German air force, which had confined itself after Salerno to sporadic harassing action, now launched its first planned, concerted air offensive since the Sicilian campaign. Troops and supplies concentrated in the small beachhead area and shipping crowding the roadsteads offshore offered ideal targets; disrupting the flow of supplies was of vital importance to the success of the enemy offensive to destroy the beachhead. The German Second Air Force, reduced by the departure of most of its

medium bombers in late December, was quickly reinforced by Junkers 88s from Greece and Germany and was supported by the antishipping bomber groups in south France. Allied air bases were over 100 miles south of the beachhead, and our planes found it difficult to counter the enemy's tactics of sneak raids and night attacks. To antiaircraft artillery fell a large share of the task of maintaining the flow of supplies and protecting key installations at the beachhead.

Enemy air raids, weak on D-day, increased sharply toward the end of January. At first the German fighter-bombers made cautious sneak raids in early morning or just before dusk. Junkers 88s from north Italy and torpedo and glider bombers from south France swooped in at dusk in low-level attacks on shipping. On 29 January, in the largest raid during the entire Italian campaign, a force of 60 followed by 50 more medium bombers sank an antiaircraft cruiser and a Liberty ship. Antiaircraft artillery attached to divisions and the 68th Coast Artillery Regiment (Antiaircraft), which was responsible for defense of the port, took a heavy toll of the Luftwaffe raiders, downing 38 and 10 probables in January alone.

Mounting craft losses and the threat of even heavier bombing raids led VI Corps and the navy to request urgently additional antiaircraft protection. The 35th Antiaircraft Artillery Brigade was attached to VI Corps on 5 February to command all antiaircraft defenses at Anzio, and Brig. Gen. Aaron Bradshaw, Jr., brigade commander, became corps antiaircraft officer. Reinforcements were dispatched to the extent of availability; eventually, by May, a total had been built up at Anzio of 1,051 guns of all calibers, including 64 90mm guns.

A carefully laid out system of antiaircraft protection in which guns were sited to cover every part of the beachhead, was developed at Anzio. The backbone of the defense was formed by the 90mm guns, emplaced in a great semicircle behind Anzio and Nettuno. These were supplemented by 40mm guns and lighter weapons, which at night employed carefully controlled barrage fire to support the heavy weapons. A large part of the effectiveness of these defenses was due to the highly centralized control system, all fire being directed from a central gun operations room. To deter low-level attacks on shipping the 102d Antiaircraft Balloon Battery flew up to 40 balloons over port and shipping. Smoke, too, was effectively employed by the 24th Chemical Decontami-

nation Company and later the 179th Chemical Smoke Generating Company to screen the harbor one-half hour before sunset and thereafter on every red alert.

Enemy planes, finding the port defenses highly effective, turned to attacking gun positions and troops in forward areas with anti-personnel bombs. The German pilots discovered that if they came in below 1000 feet at night we could not employ 90mm fire for fear of hitting our own troops. As an emergency measure to counter these low-level attacks a carefully controlled light antiaircraft barrage was employed. The forward beachhead area was divided into three sectors, with two other sectors for the port and the Nettuno airstrip. As an enemy plane entered any one of these sectors, the central gun operations room ordered a sector barrage, and 37mm and 40mm guns, each firing six rounds three seconds apart, blanketed the entire sector with fire. This barrage proved highly successful because of its careful layout and centralized control.

In the week beginning 16 February the German air force launched its strongest sustained air attack as part of the all-out offensive to reduce the beachhead. During seven days the enemy made not less than 89 separate attacks, with a peak on 16 February of an estimated 172 planes. Under the direction of the famous Colonel Pelz, who had planned the mass raids on London, every form of deception was employed to reduce the effectiveness of our defense. Decoys were used and simultaneous attacks made from many directions to confuse our radar. In coordination with the air attacks heavy 170mm and 210mm guns shelled the port area to drive our gunners to cover. In spite of these well planned efforts our antiaircraft artillery and air force broke up the attacks, antiaircraft artillery alone bringing down 25 planes and 23 probables in the seven days. The introduction of the new radar locator, SCR-584, in the next few days made our 90mm guns even more effective and countered the enemy's radar-jamming tactics.

Enemy air raids diminished during March with the abandonment of the offensive against the beachhead. Anxious to conserve its dwindling strength, reduced by heavy losses, the German air force employed more cautious tactics. Greater emphasis was placed on surprise, and expensive daylight raids were reduced in favor of night attacks. The enemy found that in every raid of over eight planes he invariably lost at least one, while small formations lost an average of only one plane in every four attacks. Conse-

quently the enemy confined himself mostly to small-scale, night nuisance raids. Antiaircraft artillery, in cooperation with the navy and air force, had broken the backbone of the only major German air effort in the Italian campaign. By 23 May, out of some 2,500 German sorties our defending guns had shot down 204 planes and probably another 133. The flow of supplies into the beachhead had been maintained and the installations at Anzio effectively protected.

On the crucial problem of supply it was early evident that a greatly increased force would have to be maintained by sea at Anzio for a much longer period than originally anticipated. Shipping schedules were therefore revised for a protracted resupply, employing both truckloaded LSTs and Liberty ships. Convoys of LSTs, which could dock directly in the port, were continued because poor weather delayed the unloading of Liberty ships by DUKW and LCT over the beaches. Starting 28 January, 300 trucks, loaded 50 to an LST, were dispatched daily, weather permitting, up the short 100-mile supply route from Naples. They were loaded with 1,500 tons—60 percent ammunition, 20 percent fuel, and 20 percent rations. Fifteen LCTs were also used to turn around weekly with supplies. Every ten days four Liberties, loaded in North Africa, were to bring in fourteen days' supply in order to build up a reserve stock at the beachhead. Since VI Corps was not equipped to handle supply functions, Fifth Army took over operation of the port and dump areas on 6 February.

The enemy shelling and air attacks placed a nervous strain on beach and dock personnel which reduced their efficiency an estimated 10 per cent. Since ammunition and gasoline dumps were necessarily concentrated in a small, highly vulnerable area, fires and at first material damage were caused. Between 22 January and 10 March 1043.8 tons of ammunition were destroyed by enemy bombing and 228.5 tons by artillery fire, an average of 27.7 tons per day. These losses, however, were at no time critical. Bulldozers and Italian labor were used to dig bunkers with loose dirt piled around on the edges to protect ammunition, and dispersal of supplies was enforced. Corps counterbattery fire, increased air defenses, and bombing attacks on enemy gun positions all played an active part in reducing the effectiveness of enemy bombing and shelling.

By the end of February supply problems had been largely solved. As the weather improved and adequate numbers of DUKWs

and LCT's became available, it was possible to discharge five and six Liberty ships at a time, and the proportion of supplies unloaded by Liberty ships greatly increased. By May six times as much was being unloaded from ships as from LSTs. The peak month of March, when 158,274 long tons of supplies were discharged, proved the success of the system; on the high day, 29 March, 7,828 tons were discharged. Because of this tremendous build-up it was only necessary to unload 97,658 tons in April. Large reserves were also built up in anticipation of the resumption of the offensive by Fifth Army. Between 22 January and 1 June, when Fifth Army turned over the port to Peninsular Base Section after 131 days of operation, 523,358 long tons had been discharged at Anzio. Far more supplies had been unloaded than originally expected, and the difficult problems of the protracted resupply of an exposed beachhead had been successfully met.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER V

<sup>1</sup>On 11 February General Alexander was still looking to his mission of driving the enemy north of Rome and was hopeful that VI Corps could resume the offensive as soon as the enemy counterattacks ended. He therefore ordered that plans be drawn up to that effect in conjunction with the imminent New Zealand Corps attack up the Liri Valley, which might draw enemy troops from the beachhead. The full extent of the German build-up at the beachhead was apparently not yet appreciated.

<sup>2</sup>In mid-March the Italian Barbarigo Battalion of the San Marco Marine Regiment and a battalion of the 1st Regiment, *Milizia Armata*, entered the Littoria sector. The Germans placed little reliance on their Axis partners, brigading them with German formations down to alternate platoons in the line and taking over from the Italians every night. In spite of these precautions 50 of the San Marco Marines managed to desert during their first ten days in the line.

<sup>3</sup>Aside from the sinking of the hospital ship HMS *David* on 24 January, the Germans do not seem deliberately to have bombed or shelled medical installations. On 7 February a German plane, under attack by a British Spitfire, jettisoned its load of anti-personnel bombs in an effort to gain altitude; the bombs fell in the area of the 95th Evacuation Hospital and thoroughly wrecked it, causing 92 casualties among patients and hospital personnel.

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## CHAPTER VI

# BREAKING THE GUSTAV LINE

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### 1. PLANS FOR A NEW BLOW

THE battle for Rome which began in mid-January had proved to be a costly failure two months later. Both at Cassino and at Anzio Fifth Army had been stopped. We had gained a beachhead at Anzio, a foothold in the mountains above Cassino, a bridge-head across the lower Garigliano—all invaluable in later operations, but limited successes in view of our main objective. Casualties had been exceedingly high. In the period 16 January-31 March Fifth Army had a casualty list of 52,130, as against a total from Salerno through the Winter Line of 37,773.<sup>1</sup> The "soft underbelly" of Europe was proving to be well armored.

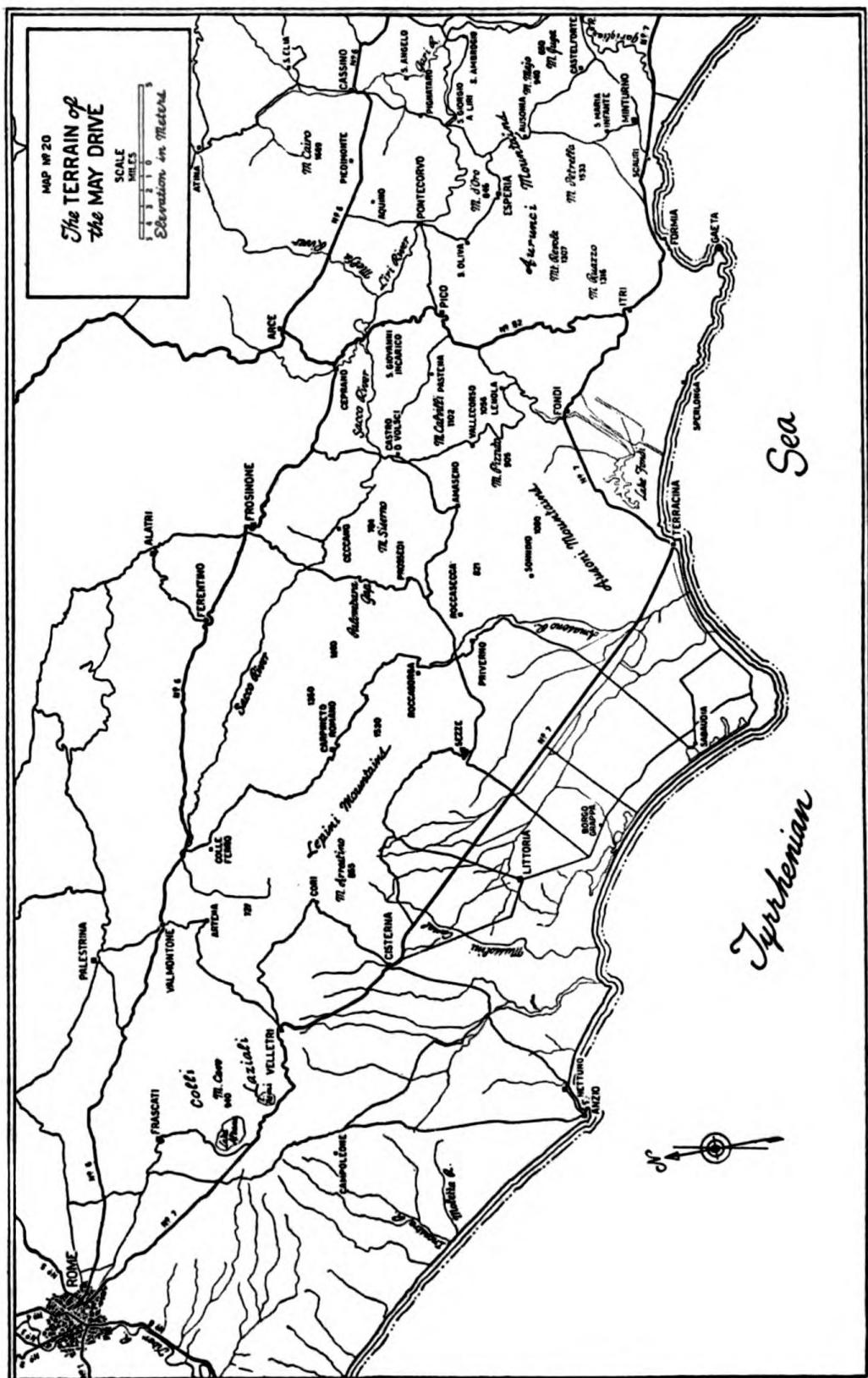
Nevertheless the Italian campaign was to be continued, and we were again to take the offensive. This being so, a major regrouping of the Allied forces in Italy was necessary. 10 Corps was in a stalemate west of the Garigliano; the FEC could not move until the Cassino bastion fell; and neither II Corps nor the New Zealand Corps had yet been able to break into the Liri Valley. The Eighth Army front had been stripped and could provide no more divisions for Fifth Army. General Alexander's problem therefore was one of creating fresh reserves while planning for the attack to break the Gustav Line. The solution, as ordered by him on 5 March, was to have the British 5 Corps under the direct command of Allied Armies in Italy (AAI), the new term for 15th Army Group, take over the east coast sector with a very thin garrison; Eighth Army would shift west of the Apennines for an eventual attack through the Liri Valley in the right part of the previous Fifth Army zone. Fifth Army was thus relieved of the responsibility of the Atina, Cassino, and Rapido fronts. Its sector now consisted of a narrow strip 13 miles wide between the sea and the Liri River; in addition Fifth Army remained in command of the Anzio beachhead, where the 5 and 34th Divisions replaced the 56 Division.

This peninsular-wide regrouping of two armies involved an extraordinary amount of motor traffic, though all efforts were made to disguise the changes. Fifth Army shifted its supply dumps from the axis of Highway 6 to that of Highway 7, and the British

built up their installations along Highway 6. Moving supplies, troops, and headquarters while at the same time fully manning a long line and carrying on the Cassino offensive of March required close coordination. Rain and the natural difficulties attendant on the movement of two large armies delayed completion of the reliefs and transfers until the end of March. The new interarmy boundary was placed in effect on 26 March; three days later the FEC and II Corps, the latter on the left, officially relieved the British 10 Corps in the Garigliano sector. 10 Corps was relieved from Fifth Army on 31 March. This change had been contemplated since October 1943 to simplify our supply and administration but had never been tactically feasible. With the reduction in our sector and the arrival of fresh American troops the release of the British troops in Fifth Army became possible, except for the 1 and 5 Divisions at Anzio.

General Clark now had seven American, three French, and two British divisions under his control. At Anzio were five and one-half divisions under VI Corps—the two British units; the 3d, 34th, and 45th Divisions; and the 1st Armored Division (less Combat Command B). On the southern front the 88th and 4th Mountain Divisions held our line in early April while the 36th, 3d Algerian, and 2d Moroccan Divisions carried out mountain training in the Avellino-Salerno area. The 85th Division, which had reached Italy in late March, moved into the line on 10-14 April west of Minturno. Reinforcements for our next drive consisted chiefly of the French 1st Motorized Division (*1<sup>e</sup> Division de Marche d'Infanterie*), which began to land at Naples on 20 April; another group of *tabor*s and sundry corps troops brought the FEC to a total of 99,000 men by early May. Apart from four 8-inch guns with a range of 35,000 yards, two pack artillery battalions, the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, and some truck units the major American accession was IV Corps Headquarters under Maj. Gen. Willis D. Crittenberger, which reached Italy on 28 March. The 91st Infantry Division arrived in the Mediterranean late in April but was initially assigned to Seventh Army and did not come to Italy until June.

During April our men on the southern front, weary of rocky slopes and dark days, had that rest which they so badly needed. Units which had suffered heavily in the winter campaign were strengthened by the transfer of officers and the arrival of replacements, which brought every division up to strength; the flow of



replacements even permitted the assignment of an overstrength of 750 men per infantry division so as to replace combat losses in the rifle companies more quickly in the next offensive and thus keep up combat efficiency. Equipment was overhauled, repaired, or replaced where necessary; for example, all field artillery pieces in the Army had been calibrated by the end of April. Tactical training revolved about exercises in mountain warfare and tank-infantry cooperation. Morale-building programs were carried out; above all the sunny Italian spring restored the morale of Fifth Army to the point it had reached at Salerno.

A fit, well trained army was needed for the tasks ahead. Between our lines on the southern front and the Anzio beachhead lay a chain of steep and rugged mountains running northwest about 60 miles and averaging 15 miles in width between the sea and the Liri-Sacco Valley. (*See Maps 12 and 20.*) Our next attack would have to drive up this chain, first the Aurunci Mountains, then the Ausoni, and finally the Lepini. The only good road, Highway 7, ran on the extreme left of this zone by the sea; the French on the right would have to use a scant network of minor roads. At Gaeta and Terracina the mountains come down to the sea; elsewhere the high ground recedes, and yields either to the flat, waterlogged Fondi and Pontine plains or to the fruitful coastal strip between Formia and Minturno. Inland are such formidable peaks as Mt. Petrella (1533 meters) and abrupt cliffs towering hundreds of feet; yet here too scrub-covered, rolling hills set amidst farmlands offer an immediate contrast to the sheer rock walls.

Immediately to our front lay on the right the hilly triangle rising to Mt. Majo (940 meters), a wild series of limestone ridges and rounded hills separated by narrow and steep-sided valleys, and on the left the low hills extending from Minturno to Mt. dei Bracchi (205 meters) and then dropping off into the Ausonia Valley. This valley rises to the north and narrows beyond Ausonia to a defile, through which runs the Ausonia-San Giorgio road. The western side of the valley is sharply delimited by the high fault escarpment of Mt. la Civita (616 meters) and Mt. Fammera (1184 meters), which marks the beginning of the Petrella massif—a region of wild mountains and upland basins stretching on six miles to the Itri-Pico road (Highway 82). No roads traverse this mass, and only a few trails give access to its interior, chiefly from the more gentle

northern and western sides. On the east a steep cliff bars entry except at Spigno; another possible route hugs the southern side of Mt. Petrella and continues on to Mt. Ruazzo.

The mountainous terrain before Fifth Army, which could be approached by road only on the flanks, strongly favored the defense. The Germans had further improved their situation by the fortification of two main lines. The first of these was the famous Gustav Line, which ran along the hills above Minturno and Castelforte, in front of Mt. Majo to the Gari-Rapido Rivers, and up the Rapido past Cassino. The second, the Adolf Hitler Line, extended from Terracina along the Fondi-Pico road to Pontecorvo and across the Liri Valley through Aquino to Piedimonte.

Between these two lines in the Fifth Army zone were two switch lines, the Dora and the Orange. The former began at the sea near Gaeta and curved east and then north about the base of the Petrella massif to Esperia and Sant' Olivá, where it connected with a spur of the Hitler Line. Just west of Ausonia the Dora Line met the Orange Line, which ran from Castelforte west through Ausonia. The main works of this latter line were astride the road north of Ausonia and evidently were designed to bar the Ausonia Defile in the event our forces broke through at Minturno; the Germans apparently believed that we could not crack the Gustav Line frontally at Mt. Majo itself and so come in behind the Orange Line.

During March and April Fifth Army gained a clear picture of the defenses of the Gustav Line, characterized by such fortifications as trenches, firing pits, pillboxes, and dugouts and weakest in the Mt. Majo area. The Hitler Line was less well known, though it apparently was—and proved to be—a belt of portable steel pillboxes and other carefully prepared positions in the Liri Valley, anchored to the south on the conical peak of Mt. d' Oro (846 meters). From photo reconnaissance, however, the interesting fact developed that the Germans did not appear to be fortifying the Petrella massif or indeed stretching a continuous belt of defenses from the Liri to the sea at any point in rear of the Gustav Line.

Early in April General Alexander informed Fifth and Eighth Armies of his future intention: a simultaneous attack by both armies on the southern front. Initially Eighth Army was to break through the enemy's positions into the Liri Valley, and Fifth Army would capture the Ausonia Defile. Though this plan was very

similar to the strategy of the January drive, such a concentration of forces represented a new departure in AAI plans. In a critique of our May operations which we later captured, Marshal Kesselring singled out this point and commented on the absolute co-ordination of the attacks. After the initial breakthrough both armies were ordered to drive forward, Eighth Army on the general axis of Highway 6 up to the area east of Rome with Fifth Army parallel to it but southwest of the Liri-Sacco rivers. In his preliminary discussions General Alexander had indicated that Fifth Army might swing northwest toward Frosinone to assist Eighth Army, but this point was not included in the written order of 5 May.

While the two armies drove northwest, 5 Corps on the Adriatic would hold its front with the minimum of troops but would vigorously pursue the enemy should he attempt to withdraw. The beachhead forces were ordered to attack after D-day on the general axis Cori-Valmontone to cut Highway 6 in the Valmontone area, thereby preventing the supply and withdrawal of the German Tenth Army on the southern front. This attack would be ready to be launched on twenty-four hours' notice from AAI at any time from D plus 4. In general the German forces between Cassino and the sea were to be smashed and all enemy units swept back over 200 miles to the Rimini-Pisa line. Execution of this intention would free Rome, which had by now become a symbol of Allied success or failure in Italy, would give us additional air bases closer to the heart of Germany, and would be another step in the Allied mission to destroy the German forces in Italy.

On considering the Fifth Army part in the attack it became evident that our mission was difficult. The Germans were well entrenched in a commanding area which they had held against a previous attack by 10 Corps. The natural defenses of this region were weakest at the south near Minturno, but even if we broke through here into the Ausonia Valley we should only have put ourselves into a pocket commanded by the La Civita-Fammera escarpment on the west and by Mt. Majo on the north. The enemy had built the fortifications of the Orange Line north of Ausonia against just such a possibility. Study of the terrain immediately ahead of Fifth Army made it clear that the difficult terrain about Mt. Majo was the key to the Ausonia Defile; if we held Mt. Majo, the Ausonia Valley and the Orange Line would fall almost automatically.

In many ways capture of the Ausonia Defile was an easier task than the subsequent advance. When Fifth Army had reached the Ausonia Valley and the defile at its north end, our troops would then face the almost insurmountable rock cliffs of the Petrella massif. On either side of this mass roads led through to Itri and Pico, but the Germans had barred each flank with their Dora Line and also with the Hitler Line in the case of the Esperia-Pico route. Attack directly through the mountains from the east and south would be most difficult even to infantry; if the enemy were warned, he could throw enough troops into the area from the north and west to hold the mountains indefinitely.

Nevertheless, after considerable study of trails and methods of supply in the mountains, Fifth Army decided on a bold plan of attack. If the mountains dominated our objectives, then we would attack through the mountains. First the FEC would take Mt. Majo and the Ausonia Defile, while II Corps gained control of the hills north of Minturno overlooking the south end of the Ausonia Valley. Then the French would drive straight across the valley into the Petrella massif, assisted by II Corps at Mt. la Civita and Spigno. Afterwards both corps would fan out and seize the lower ground to the flanks so as to put their front on the Itri-Pico road. All divisions of Fifth Army on the southern front except the 36th Division, in Army reserve, would be committed; surprise and aggressiveness were the keynotes of the plan. Instead of slugging forward slowly, Fifth Army would smash the enemy with one fierce blow and crack him open.

In this scheme we would hit the enemy at the point where he least suspected attack, and would penetrate his lines of defense at the most poorly fortified points. Time after time in the past phases of the Italian campaign Fifth Army had found it easier to advance in mountainous terrain, where enemy observation and fields of fire had numerous blind spots, than over a rolling countryside, the even slopes of which afforded superb final protective lines to the German machine guns. Yet another factor which facilitated our eventual decision was the presence of the 4th Mountain Division and the *goumiers*; trained for mountain warfare, these French troops were just what Fifth Army needed to spearhead the drive.

If the enemy did not succeed in stopping our first attack within the Gustav Line, he was very likely to run into serious difficulties, for he lacked reserves and his supply system was weak. At the beginning of our attack the German command and distribution

of forces were unchanged from the past two months. The overall command was Army Group Southwest (or C) under Marshal Kesselring. North Italy, with the Riviera and part of Yugoslavia, was called Area Witthoeft and was garrisoned by one corps and seven divisions, four of them in Italy. Fourteenth Army with two corps and eight divisions under General Mackensen was responsible for containing our troops in the Anzio beachhead and for guarding the coast north of the Tiber; Tenth Army under General Vietinghoff held the southern front with two corps and ten divisions. Before Fifth Army were the 94th Grenadier Division from Scauri to Ausente Creek and the 71st Grenadier Division, reinforced by elements of three other divisions, on the long sector from the Ausente to the Liri; both divisions were under XIV Panzer Corps. In all Marshal Kesselring had in Italy on 3 April 22 divisions, the same number as AAI; the bulk of his units, however, was greatly under strength in men and material.

For reserves he could use in addition to the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division from the Leghorn area the 90th and 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions, and the 26th Panzer Division. When these had been committed, as they were early in the May drive, further reinforcements could be gained only by pulling units out of the Adriatic line. The German High Command had evidently decided that the requirements of other theaters precluded any increase in its Italian investment, and that the German forces in Italy would be adequate at least for an orderly, deliberate withdrawal in the event of a heavy attack. This proved to be costly economy.

The enemy supply situation was no better. While our supplies moved up from Naples by rail to Teano, Sparanise, and Carinola or by pipeline to Mignano and Sessa—unhampered by enemy air save for desultory raids on Naples harbor—the materials of war for the enemy were forced to run a long gantlet all the way down the Italian Peninsula. Three means of transportation were available to the enemy—rail, motor, and ship—and all were hammered by our XII Tactical Air Command. As the flying weather improved in April, our flyers put into effect the lessons they had learned during the winter; at no time during the month were the rail lines south from Florence and Leghorn open. The bulk of German supplies was accordingly transshipped in the Florence area from rail to truck and came down Highways 1 and 2 through Rome, but this movement likewise was harassed, both by night and

day attacks on motor convoys and by a program against motor parks and repair installations. When the weather permitted, between 100 and 200 sorties were flown daily against enemy communications and dumps.

Prisoners of war agreed that facing the blows of our air force from Florence south was unpleasant. Nevertheless the German forces on the front lines opposite us were never critically short of rations or ammunition, and any interruptions in the flow of supplies close to the front were due more to immediate artillery action on our part than to the activities of the air force farther in the rear. Enemy artillery ammunition had to be conserved, and enemy reserves in all branches of supply were not high; but enough material got through our aerial blockade to keep the enemy in fighting condition. Presumably the burdens imposed on the German system of supply did help speed the enemy collapse in our May drive, but precise evidence on the importance of this factor is not yet available.

To take advantage of the enemy weaknesses and faulty troop dispositions every effort was made to keep our preparations secret. A deceptive plan, suggesting another amphibious landing, was carried out behind our lines; on the front all aspects of Fifth Army activity were regulated to present a picture of static defense. Dumps and traffic in the forward areas were limited; as far as possible movement of units was held down or camouflaged. An increase in artillery fire was avoided until H-hour, when the corps artillery would deliver a quick, smashing blow for 40 to 80 minutes on enemy batteries, followed by attention to command posts, reserves, dumps, and lines of communications.<sup>2</sup> The actual build-up for the attack was carried out very quietly. The 85th and 88th Divisions in II Corps regrouped on and after 3 May; the FEC built up the strength in its forward zone from one division to elements of four during 1-11 May. The engineers had replaced most of the Bailey bridges in the Army and corps zone with permanent structures and had an ample supply of bridging located well forward, but neither they nor the signal linesmen made any obvious preparations for the attack. To avoid building up the dumps Army ordnance received the bulk of its ammunition for the attack from Peninsular Base Section in the two weeks before the attack, when it issued out 16,238 tons. D-day was 11 May,<sup>3</sup> and on that afternoon commanders read to their troops orders of the day by General Alexander and General Clark, stressing the im-

portance of the forthcoming battle as the first blow in the final struggle with Nazi Germany. H-hour was 2300, set so as to give us a chance to break through the enemy defenses in the dark and then exploit by the aid of moonlight after the moon rose at 2331.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. THE FEC BREAKTHROUGH

11-19 May 1944

Darkness settled slowly over the Garigliano River on the evening of 11 May. The day had been cloudy, and a little rain had fallen. After sunset smoke and haze still blanketed the valley, but the vast canopy of stars shone down brightly from a clear sky. Except for the crash of an occasional artillery piece all was still. Long columns of swarthy French colonial troops and laden mules moved softly along the steep trails and roads leading to the Mt. Juga bridgehead. On the lines of departure the infantry stirred restlessly. The enemy came out of his hiding places and went unsuspectingly about his tasks of strengthening fortifications, patrolling, and bringing up supplies. All was normal, as it had been to German eyes and ears for the past month.

Suddenly at 2300 the guns on the right roared into action. Great flashes burst up from the hills and hundreds of shells screamed across the Garigliano. Then the crash and roar swept down the line through II Corps to the sea. The mountains across the river became an inferno of exploding shells and bursting flares. The ridges were outlined briefly, faded quickly from sight, and then came into view again and again.

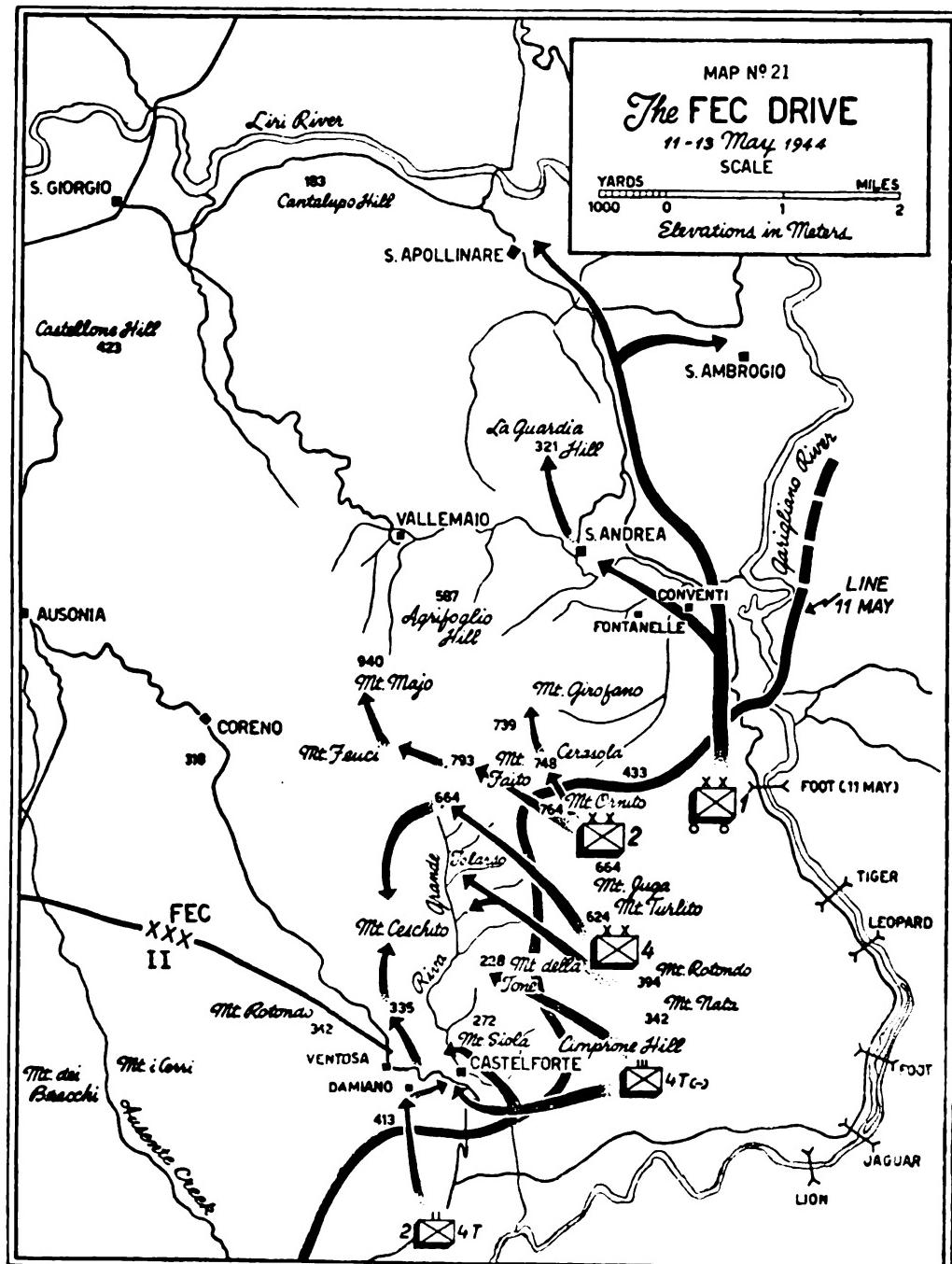
Throughout the night and the following day more than 1,000 guns roared from Cassino to the sea. Of these, about 600 were massed under the control of Fifth Army; during the first twenty-four hours of the attack, our artillery fired 173,941 rounds against the enemy. The effect of this savage, concentrated smash was overwhelming. Enemy batteries were tossed in ruins; routes of supply were pitted by shell holes; command posts disappeared from the web of German communications. The mass of information which we had piled up about the Gustav Line had been used to give the enemy a number of surprises on D-day.

When the sun rose on 12 May, our air force began its operations to isolate the battlefield. Though cloudy weather seriously interfered with these efforts, our pilots reported fair results. In addition to 294 fighter-bomber sorties 429 medium-bomber sorties

were flown on communications behind the enemy lines. In the heavy-bomber class 728 sorties hit at communications and other targets. Kesselring's headquarters was attacked twice during the day, and the bombs of 80 heavy bombers completely destroyed Tenth Army Headquarters. Continuation of this pounding day after day brought a cumulative effect which hampered the enemy severely and made his ruin the more certain.

Successes had been reported in the first hours of the attack, as our infantry drove forward swiftly under cover of the artillery concentrations. On the left, before II Corps, the enemy held more firmly, but on the right the French smashed through to Mt. Revole by 16 May. The Gustav Line was destroyed, the Hitler Line itself was turned by the 19th, and every effort of the enemy to reorganize had failed. The French drive, indeed, was one of the most spectacular operations thus far in the history of Fifth Army.

General Juin's plan called for the 2d Moroccan Division to attack at H-hour for Mt. Majo, assisted on its left by the 4th Mountain Division, aiming at Castelforte. On the right the 1st Motorized Division would attack at daylight on 12 May toward Sant' Andrea and La Guardia Hill. (*See Map 21.*) The attack jumped off promptly when the artillery loosed its blast at Mts. Faito, Feuci, and Girofano, so damaging enemy communications that his artillery and mortars remained silent during our first advance. Within an hour the 8th Moroccan Infantry was on Mt. Faito, and the 4th Moroccan Infantry on the right was on Cerlasola Hill despite enemy Fougasse flame throwers. Thereafter the enemy on Mts. Feuci and Girofano recovered and held throughout the 12th, causing considerable casualties in both regiments. An attack planned by the 8th Moroccan Infantry against Mt. Feuci was stopped after noon by the counterattack of the entire 2d Battalion, 115th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. Four of the 12 battalions which had begun preparatory concentrations for the attack were forced to shift to defensive fires on the west end of the saddle between Feuci and Faito. The violence of the enemy attack, verging on desperation, caused considerable alarm, and General Juin hastened to the scene to direct the battle personally. At 1515 the Germans were finally forced to retire after inflicting and receiving considerable casualties, but our attempt to follow up the failure was beaten back by a tremendous concentration of enemy mortar and artillery fire which covered the entire eastern side of Mt. Feuci.



Early on the 13th the 4th Moroccan Infantry, reinforced by the 5th Moroccan Infantry, attacked north again for Mt. Girofano and held firm possession of it by 0730; the 8th Moroccan Infantry pushed to Mt. Feuci after daylight despite another counterattack and followed an enemy evacuation to take Mt. Majo by the middle of the afternoon. In less than two days of fighting the 2d Moroccan Division under General Dody

had driven through the Gustav Line to the keystone of all German defenses west of the Garigliano. From this penetration the enemy was never to recover, and every step thereafter which he took to plug his gap was always one move too late. Immediately, the success of the division assured a breakthrough by the French units operating in the lower ground to either flank.

To the northeast of Mt. Majo the 1st Motorized Division under Maj. Gen. Diego Brosset struck against the enemy forces holding the bend in the Garigliano River. During the night of 11-12 May advance forces filled the antitank ditch to their front, and at 0500 an armor-infantry attack of the 4th Motorized Brigade, the 757th Tank Battalion, and the 8th Tank Destroyer Battalion (*8<sup>e</sup> Régiment de Chasseurs d' Afrique*) drove north. Fighting was heavy, and the enemy was much aided by support from Mt. Girofano; when this point fell to the 2d Moroccan Division early on the 13th, the French troops in the lower ground along the Garigliano were able to move forward swiftly. By midnight of the 13th they held Sant' Ambrogio, Sant' Apollinare, and La Guardia Hill. The prisoner toll for the day ran into several hundred and marked the end of organized resistance in this area.

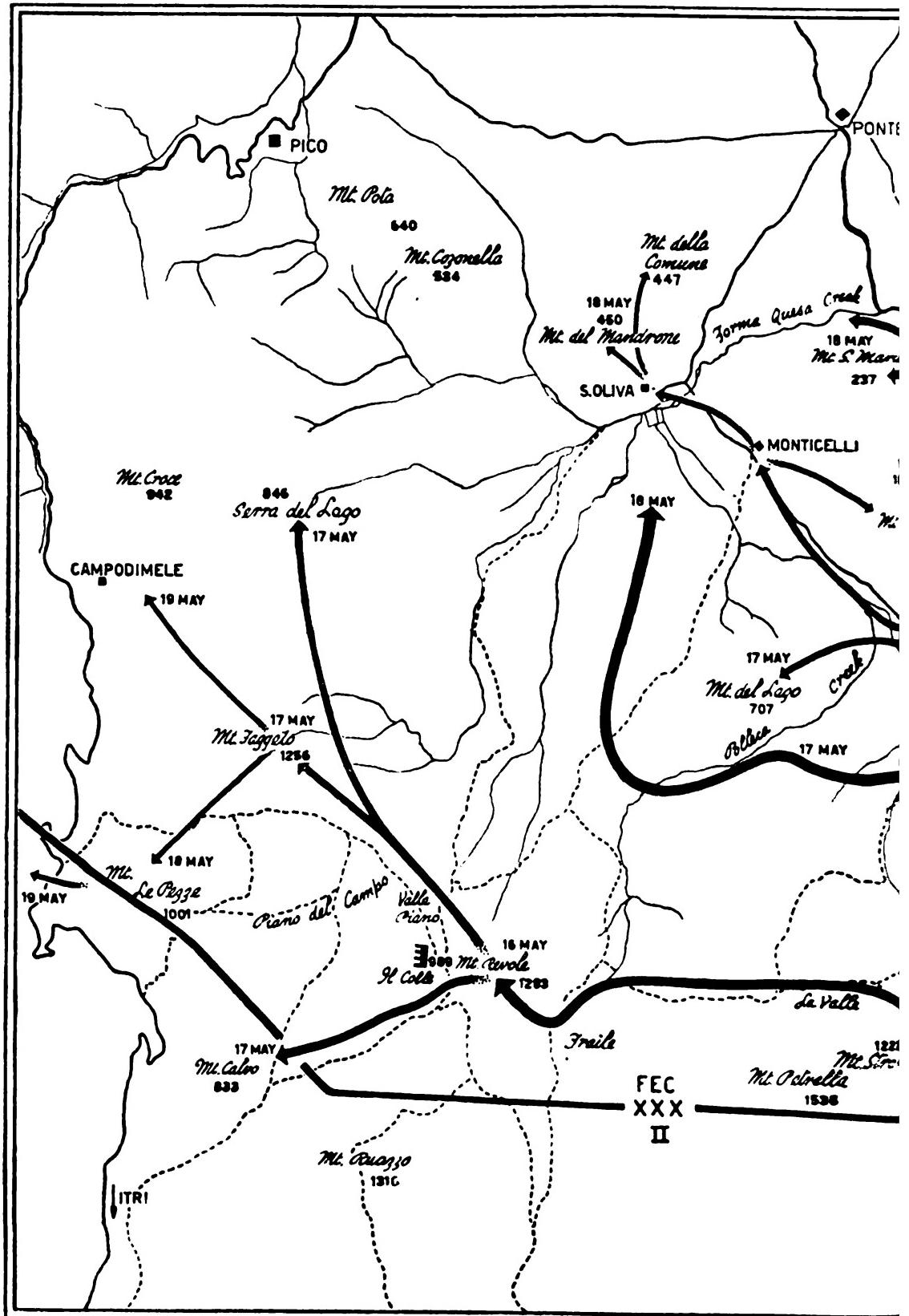
On the left flank of the FEC three infantry regiments were employed by Maj. Gen. François Sevez of the 4th Mountain Division in his initial assault. The 6th Moroccan Infantry assisted the 2d Moroccan Division by taking positions on the south slopes of Mt. Faito overlooking the upper reaches of the gorge of Riva Grande; the 2d Moroccan Infantry drove northwest to clear the eastern slopes of this gorge; and the 4th Tunisian Infantry of the 3d Algerian Division, supported by the 755th Tank Battalion, the 7th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and *Spahis* (reconnaissance), assailed Castelforte from the east, south, and west. The main activity of the 12th was devoted to Castelforte. All morning the 194th Grenadier Regiment harassed the advance with mortar and machine-gun fire from Castelforte and Damiano, and during the afternoon the garrison put up a stiff resistance. Attacks were begun by our forces twice in the early afternoon, but stopped each time because of insufficient strength. Shortly after a new attack was launched in force at 1700, the enemy was radioing that we were all about the town and that the situation was desperate; mopping up continued until well after dark, but Castelforte was firmly in our hands.

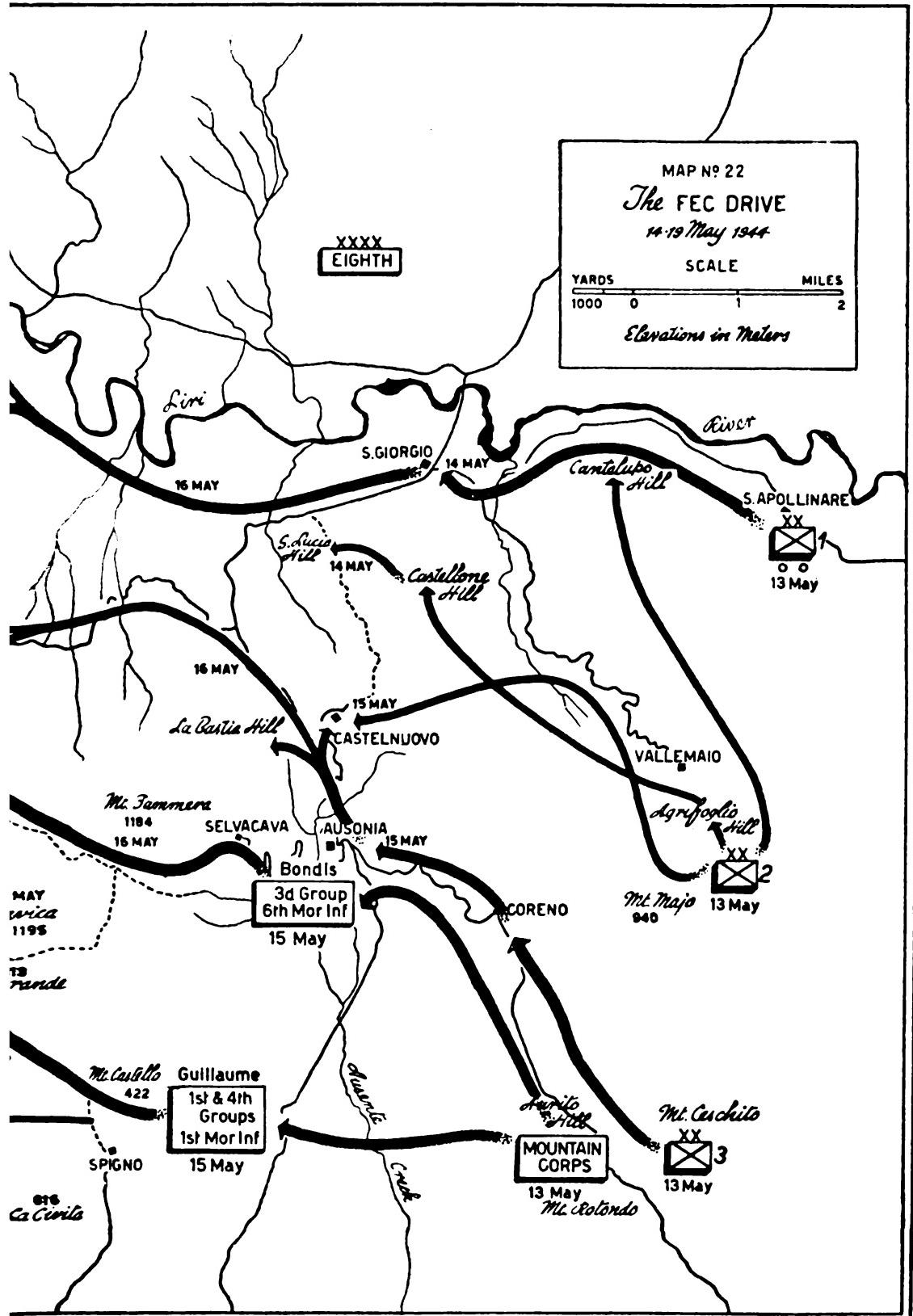
The capture of Castelforte opened the way to Coreno, but it was first necessary to widen the gap by taking the hills on either side of the Castelforte-Coreno road. Mt. Rotondo on the south was taken by the 350th Infantry on the afternoon of the 13th, and the French spent most of the day in reducing enemy resistance about Mt. Ceschito to the north of the road. This action involved the cooperation of the 6th Moroccan Infantry to the north, the 2d Moroccan Infantry to the east, and the 4th Tunisian Infantry to the south in a brilliant encircling attack which netted over 700 prisoners.

By the evening of 13 May the French had everywhere broken through the enemy lines. On the right the 1st Motorized Division had reached Sant' Apollinare and was preparing to drive on to San Giorgio. The main thrust by the 2d Moroccan Division in the center had put our forces in firm control of Mt. Majo, the key to the Ausonia Defile. Skillful penetrations by the 4th Mountain Division with one regiment of the 3d Algerian Division on the south had gained Castelforte and the hills overlooking the Coreno road. Over 1000 prisoners had been taken, and the 71st Grenadier Division to our front was rapidly disintegrating in the rout. Concerted, speedy action by the troops of the FEC had thus prepared the way for rapid exploitation to Esperia and to Mt. Revole in the Petrella massif.

The operations against Castelforte had provided a base of departure for the startling drive of the so-called Mountain Corps across the Ausonia Valley, up the stern cliffs on its western side, and over the mountains to the Itri-Pico road. This force consisted of the 1st, 3d, and 4th Groups of *Tabors*, the 1st Moroccan Infantry of the 4th Mountain Division, and the 2d Battalion, 69th Algerian Artillery Regiment (*69e Régiment d'Artillerie Algérienne*) : a total of approximately 12,000 men and 4000 animals.

Initially the *tabors* were held in reserve on the east bank of the Garigliano. On the morning of the 12th they began to move forward by the Damiano bridge, entered Castelforte in the evening behind the forces of the 4th Tunisian Infantry, and moved out promptly from the north end of the town after dark. About 500 yards northwest of Castelforte the *tabors* turned off the Coreno road and continued west along a trail toward Mt. I Cerri. In the valley north of Mt. Rotondo they halted and waited throughout the 13th for the other French forces to clean out Ceschito to





the north. During this halt Brig. Gen. Augustin Guillaume divided his Mountain Corps into three groups or task forces (*groupements*) as follows: the 3d Group of *Tabors* and the 6th Moroccan Infantry; the 4th Group of *Tabors* and a battalion of the 1st Moroccan Infantry; the 1st Group of *Tabors* and a second battalion of the 1st Moroccan Infantry. At this time the 6th Moroccan Infantry was still operating under the control of the 4th Mountain Division, but it could be expected to swing west and join the 3d Group of *Tabors* on completion of the Ceschito action.

The plan of attack called for all three groups to move out as soon as Ceschito had fallen. The 3d Group of *Tabors* under Colonel Bondis would drive northwest along the Coreno road to seize Ausonia or at least to bar enemy counterattacks out of the Ausonia Defile. (See Map 22.) When the 3d Algerian Division came up, the Bondis Group was to move on Mt. Fammera. The other two groups (1st and 4th) under the direct command of General Guillaume would push west to the break in the Fammera-Civita escarpment at Spigno and then enter the mountains. Advance across the Ausonia road was necessarily dependent upon success by the 88th Division in its mission of seizing the high ground about Mt. dei Bracchi and also the Civita crest south of Spigno.

During the night of 13-14 May, after the fall of Ceschito, the three groups fanned out in accordance with their orders. The 1st and 4th Groups were held just east of the Ausonia road late on the 14th by enemy opposition, but the French breakthrough to Mt. Majo and the stubborn attacks by II Corps forced the enemy to withdraw the bulk of his shattered forces from the upper Ausonia Valley during the night of 14-15 May. At dawn on the 15th the 1st Group of *Tabors* moved west across the Ausente against light opposition; cut just north of Spigno, which the 351st Infantry already held; and by 1130 had gained Mt. Castello directly north of the town. The 4th Group of *Tabors* likewise moved west but halted below the escarpment until the 1st Group of *Tabors* had gained its foothold. To the north elements of the 3d Group of *Tabors*, the Bondis Group, had pushed past Ausonia and scaled Mt. Fammera. The way for the dash to Mt. Revole was open.

During the afternoon of the 15th the Moroccan mountaineers under General Guillaume split into two echelons and began the ascent of the tortuous trail on Mt. Strampaduro. In one stretch of 700 yards this path, barely wide enough for a man, rises 400 feet; yet the first echelon scrambled up and assembled on the first

heights of the Petrella massif by 1600. The second echelon contained heavier equipment and made the climb more slowly but no less successfully. No opposition was met in the ascent.

As the drive to Esperia got under way on the north, General Guillaume pressed west along the miserable trails of the mountains. During the night of 15-16 May the *goumiers* of the 1st and 4th Groups kept steadily on the march, except for a brief halt every four hours. Passing below Rave Grande and along La Valle, they crossed the basin of the Fraile by dawn, and at 0600, 16 May, the advance guard had reached the crest of Mt. Revole (1283 meters)—a gain of 12 miles from the old bridgehead line in four and one-half days. Opposition was paltry during this last push, for there were almost no Germans to meet our troops. Once again the daring of our plan, to strike the enemy where he least expected an attack, was proving justified.

During the rest of the 16th the remainder of the *goumiers* closed at Mt. Revole. The exhaustion of men and mules forced a brief halt at this point, while the two battalions of the 1st Moroccan Infantry kept on to positions to the north. By 1200 a battery of the 3d Battalion, 69th Algerian Artillery Regiment, was in position on Polleca Creek 1800 yards to the east of Mt. Revole. From the latter point could be observed the general enemy withdrawal before II Corps into Itri, but the 75mm pack howitzers with the *goumiers* could not reach these tempting targets. Prearranged plans for aerial resupply were carried out on the 17th, when 36 A-20s of XII Tactical Air Command dropped 40 tons of mixed supplies along the Spigno-Strampaduro-La Valle trail. Recovery of roughly 60 percent was reported and proved sufficient to keep operations moving until the pack trains could bring up supplies.

The Mountain Corps now had two objectives: the first to cut the Pico-Itri road, and the second to bring its full weight against the rear of Pico to smash the expected enemy stand on the Hitler Line. On the 17th the *goumiers* pressed west from Mt. Revole in three columns. One group struck due west for Mt. Calvo, about three miles from Mt. Revole; a second group turned northwest toward Mt. Faggeto; and a third group headed on beyond the second for Serra del Lago. Despite the long marches all three positions were reached by the late afternoon. The drive to Mt. Calvo proved uneventful, but at its destination the first group met stubborn resistance from German troops defending the enemy withdrawal into Itri. The other two groups ran into enemy details

building a road at the northwest end of Valle Piana. Our columns deployed in the hills on each side of the basin and then trapped the enemy workers. Thereafter the two groups separated, and each proceeded to its objective without delay. The battalion of 75mm howitzers moved to Il Colle and brought the Itri-Pico road under fire during the afternoon of the 17th.

Our advance to Mt. Faggeto put us on the outskirts of the enemy defensive lines about Pico. In the evening of the 17th the *goumiers* on Faggeto met an infantry battalion which had been trucked to the area to strengthen the German defenses. Though the enemy infantry were supported by tanks, the French mountain troops succeeded in setting fire to several of the tanks and trucks, took many prisoners, and drove the remainder back toward Pico. By dawn of the 18th Mt. Faggeto and Mt. le Pezze to the southwest were firmly occupied. Further advance was hampered by supply difficulties, but the troops of General Guillaume occupied Campodimele on the morning of the 19th. The appearance of enemy self-propelled guns on the highway checked the exploitation to the north by our lightly equipped mountain troops, and the Mountain Corps proceeded to concentrate about Campodimele.

Highway 82 itself was definitely cut by this time. Some patrols had crossed the Itri-Pico road in the vicinity of Mt. Vele before noon on the 19th. The battalion of mountain artillery on Il Colle had maintained steady harassing fire on the road, and along its eastern side French troops controlled the hills from Mt. Calvo to just north of Campodimele. The entry of II Corps into Itri on the afternoon of the 19th protected the left flank of the FEC. On the right flank other French forces had by this time mopped up the Majo district, captured Ausonia and Esperia, and were in position east of Pico ready to cooperate with the Mountain Corps in an attack on this pivot of the Hitler Line.

This latter advance had been carried out in a fluid, swift drive. After taking Mt. Majo the 2d Moroccan Division had pushed on down the two ridges leading north to Castellone Hill and Cantalupo Hill overlooking the Liri. The former fell to the 5th Moroccan Infantry on the morning of the 14th; the latter, to the 4th Moroccan Infantry in the evening. The third regiment of the division, the 8th Moroccan Infantry, turned west and controlled the Ausonia Defile from the village of Castel-

nuovo by 0930, 15 May. The speed with which the 2d Moroccan Division was able to push north was due in part to the simultaneous thrust by the 1st Motorized Division along the south bank of the Liri, which put it in San Giorgio by 1930, 14 May. There it was held throughout the 15th by German antitank guns to the west.

While the 2d Moroccan Division and the 1st Motorized Division cooperated north of Mt. Majo, the 4th Mountain Division and the 3d Algerian Division, the latter under General de Monsabert, cleaned up the area west of Mt. Majo past Ausonia. Distinct divisional zones were disregarded in this operation as troops of all units sliced through the enemy defenses in a speedy attack to gain the Ausonia Defile, Mt. Fammera, and Esperia.

The Bondis Group took Coreno on the afternoon of the 14th and drove on past Ausonia, where enemy forces held out until noon of the following day. Elements of the 3d Algerian Division came up the Castelforte-Coreno road on the morning of the 15th, relieved the 6th Moroccan Infantry from its containing role at Ausonia, and pushed a detachment of armor north to Castelnuovo, which the 2d Moroccan Division had just taken. An attempt to reach the Esperia road junction was delayed by strong enemy resistance at La Bastia Hill throughout the 15th, but early on the 16th the French silenced the antitank guns on its lower slopes and slipped on by to the junction of the San Giorgio and Esperia roads by 0800. In the afternoon the 3d Algerian Infantry moved up to the junction and beat off an attack by the 3d Battalion, 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, a fresh unit which was committed in vain for the defense of Esperia. The 2d Battalion, 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, which came up from Fondi to Esperia during the day, suffered heavy losses and was finally dispersed by our artillery. The French thrusts were moving so rapidly and were so numerous that the German command south of the Liri found itself completely unable to cope with the situation.

While the 3d Algerian Division was thus driving north from Ausonia to get in position for the Esperia attack, the 3d Group of *Tabors* had advanced west. During the night of 14-15 May, before the fall of Ausonia, the *goumiers* had pushed to the base of the Fammera escarpment, and by 1100, 15 May, elements of this force on horseback had ascended the steep slopes at a small break southwest of Ausonia between Mt. Fammera and Mt.

Chiavica. To their south the main force of the Mountain Corps was at this same time driving up to Mt. Castello in preparation for the dash to Mt. Revole. During the afternoon the 6th Moroccan Infantry, relieved at Ausonia, moved west to join the main body of the 3d Group at Selvacava, and after dark our troops made their way to the top of the escarpment. During the 16th they drove west below Esperia, brushing aside the 171st Field Replacement Battalion.

By the morning of 17 May the forces on the right flank of the FEC were ready to launch their attack on Esperia. The 2d Moroccan Division had mopped up the ridges north of Mt. Majo and was thereafter relieved. The 1st Motorized Division, which had pinched it out on the north, had silenced the anti-tank guns holding it up and now lay west of San Giorgio. On the left flank of this division the 3d Algerian Division was in command of the Ausonia-Esperia road junction; in the hills above, the Bondis Group was 2000 yards south of Esperia at dawn and was threatening to encircle the village from the west as the 3d Algerian Division closed in from the east. Additional armor had been freed from mopping up in the Ausonia Valley and joined the division during the night.

For the attack on Esperia the 3d Algerian Division was divided into three groups, two of infantry and one of armor. Two groups pushed west along the road; the third cut into the hills to the south in an effort to trap the enemy, but the garrison of Esperia pulled out hastily and allowed us free entrance just before noon. The pursuit continued rapidly to the point where the Esperia road begins to drop down into the Monticelli valley; here the armor in the van halted to give the accompanying infantry time to check the flanks and catch up. Troops of the 3d Algerian Infantry secured positions on the slopes of Mt. d'Oro on the northeast, and the armor moved forward again just before dusk. Suddenly enemy antitank guns opened up from the hills on both sides, from Sant'Oliva to the front, and from the crest of Mt. d'Oro. Caught in a trap, our armor beat a hasty retreat toward Esperia, stopping finally behind the cover afforded by a crest just west of the town. On the north side of this mountain the 1st Motorized Division advance elements had been halted by extensive minefields and by mortar and automatic-weapon fire from Mt. d'Oro and the north side of the Liri. The enemy had been discovered, and the period of our easy pursuit was over.

On the 18th our advance met stubborn resistance, but important gains were secured. The Bondis Group had pushed forward from Mt. Fammara to the hills south of Mt. del Lago on the 17th, and curved north by noon of the 18th to the heights directly south of and commanding Sant' Oliva. During the night of 17-18 May part of the 3d Algerian Infantry advanced up Mt. d' Oro from the neighborhood of Monticelli and gained the crest by the middle of the next morning in conjunction with an attack by the 1st Motorized Division on the two hills to the north. Other elements of the 3d Algerian Infantry cleared Monticelli itself, routing a company of the 1st Battalion, 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. This unit belonged to the 26th Panzer Division; its appearance was the first indication that powerful reinforcements had been thrown in the line to stop the French drive on Pico.

After the capture of the valuable terrain feature of Mt. d' Oro infantry of the 1st Motorized Division worked forward to the east bank of Forma Quesa Creek by the afternoon of the 18th. To their left the 3d Algerian Division pressed on to Sant' Oliva. Enemy resistance grew stronger but seemed to be falling back on Pico. In the rolling swells along the upper reaches of Forma Quesa Creek our troops met steel pillboxes of Cassino fame; some were defended, others were abandoned, but the French came in from the southeast and took most of them on the flank. By 1400 the village of Sant' Oliva was completely cleared; by midnight the infantry pushed patrols up Mt. del Mandrone and Mt. della Comune. Dawn of the 19th found the enemy rapidly growing more sensitive to our efforts, and the French troops north and west of Sant' Oliva received mortar and artillery fire from enemy emplacements about Mt. Leucio to the north.

On 19 May the French front extended along the east side of the Itri-Pico road from Mt. Calvo to Campodimele, then cut across the mountains to the hill mass west and north of Sant' Oliva, and down the east bank of Forma Quesa Creek to the Liri. The left flank was held by two groups of *tabor*s of the Mountain Corps with two battalions of infantry; in the center were the Bondis Group with one group of *tabor*s and two battalions of infantry, another group with five battalions of infantry, and the bulk of the 3d Algerian Division. The 1st Motorized Division on the right flank curved about the west and north

slopes of Mt. d' Oro. Since Eighth Army in the Liri Valley had fallen behind the FEC from the opening days of the attack, the 1st Motorized Division was forced to keep a considerable part of its strength along the south bank of the Liri River and constantly met enemy fire from the north bank.

The drive by the FEC cannot be easily schematized. Regimental and even divisional organization had been broken down on occasion; units crossed the paths of each other and not infrequently wound up on the objectives assigned to someone else; considerable pockets of the enemy were by-passed in the drive to reach the principal keypoints. In his critique of our operations Marshal Kesselring noted that

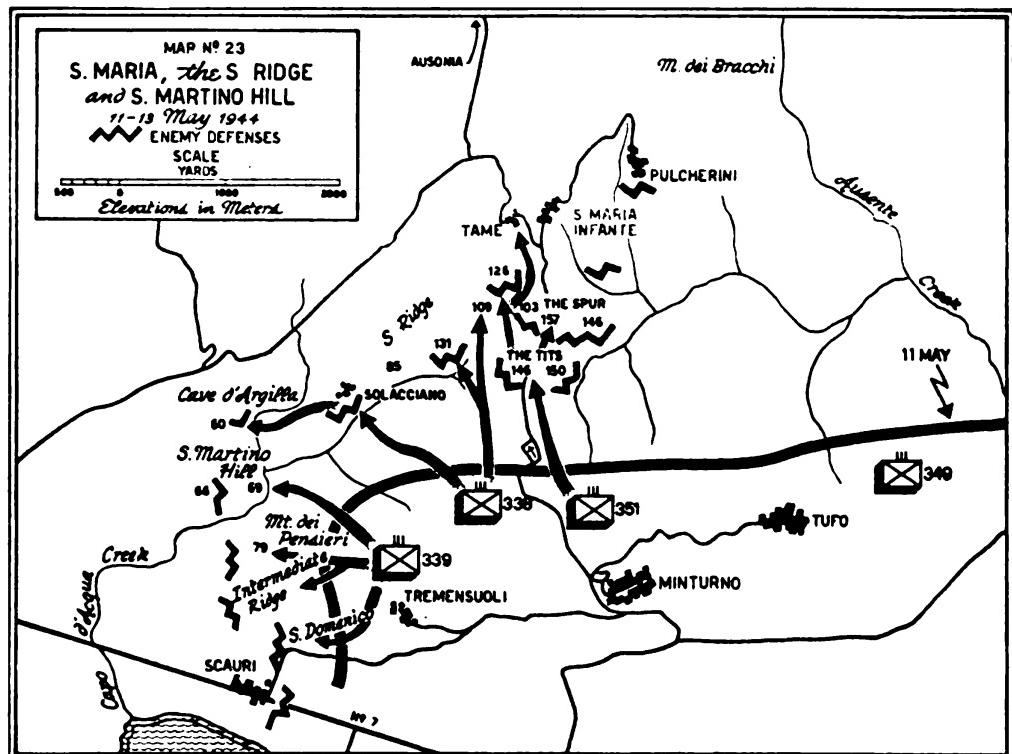
British and American tactics were again methodical. Local successes were seldom exploited. On the other hand the French, particularly the Moroccans, fought with great *élan*, and exploited each local success by concentrating immediately all available forces at the weakened point.

By the employment of such tactics the drive of the FEC in the first eight days of the May attack was extraordinarily successful. Large bodies of troops had been moved through terrain which the Germans deemed impassable and had arrived at their objectives in fighting condition. The Gustav Line had been broken, and the Hitler Line was so outflanked by our dominance of Mt. d' Oro and our threat to Pico that it could not long remain tenable. FEC's advance south of the Liri was of inestimable value to the British drive up the Liri Valley, and also greatly assisted the progress of II Corps along the coast to the left.

### 3. II CORPS TAKES ITRI

11-19 May 1944

The attack of II Corps on 11 May was launched by the 85th Division on the left, initially for San Martino Hill and the S Ridge, and by the 88th Division on the right for Santa Maria Infante and Hill 413. The 36th Division, in AAI reserve south of Mondragone, was to be ready to pass through the 88th Division after the latter had taken Spigno and Mt. la Civita, with the mission of capturing Mt. Sant' Angelo and advancing west in the mountains to cut the Itri-Pico road. The plan of maneuver consisted essentially of local turning attacks to slug through the strong defenses of the Gustav Line, with the main weight being



exerted in the wedge of hills running north from Minturno to Mt. dei Bracchi. If these hills could be secured, the enemy positions in the lower Ausonia Valley would collapse, and our forces could drive west on Itri. On the left, by the sea, our activity was to be minor.

The attack order of the 88th Division under Maj. Gen. John E. Sloan assigned the principal missions of the first phase to its two flank regiments. The 350th Infantry, commanded by Col. J. C. Fry, was ordered to break German resistance on the right in the hills southwest of Castelforte. On the left the 351st Infantry, commanded by Col. Arthur S. Champeny, had the mission of driving the enemy from the village of Santa Maria. In the center of the 88th Division line the 349th Infantry under Lt. Col. Joseph B. Crawford established forward positions on the hills northeast of Tufo to support the attack of the 351st Infantry, but was not to take active part in the attack until its neighboring units on either flank had gained their first objectives.

As the artillery barrage began at 2300, 11 May, a Bofors gun started its red tracers ricochetting up the mountain sides in the zone of the 350th Infantry to mark the boundary between the two assault battalions. These moved forward swiftly; before daylight the 1st Battalion on Hill 413 and the 2d Battalion on Hill 316 to the northwest had consolidated their conquests and

so had secured the left flank of the French attack on Castelforte. Meanwhile Company C, 753d Tank Battalion, attacked through the 3d Battalion along Ausente Creek and overran Ceracoli Hill. Our infantry followed up to consolidate the gain. When the 4th Tunision Infantry had cleared Castelforte, the 1st Battalion jumped off, in the afternoon of the 13th, for Mt. Rotondo, which was easily occupied by dark. This gain completed the aid which had been requested by the FEC.

Well to the left the 351st Infantry attacked on the night of 11 May north along the ridge which carries the Minturno-Santa Maria road. This ridge falls away on each side in numerous draws and terraced slopes, but to the west it is commanded by the S Ridge, a series of seven hills extending 1200 yards from Solacciano to Tame. (*See Map 23.*) The entire area had an air of desolation even before our attack. The fields were covered with grain, weeds, and wild poppies; the vineyards were unkempt; and the olive trees were broken and shattered by mortar and artillery fire. Every terrain feature and stone house had been utilized by the Germans to establish interlocking bands of fire covering all avenues of approach. On the S Ridge the German garrison consisted of the 1st Battalion, 267th Grenadier Regiment; Santa Maria, which dominated the ridge road from the north, was defended by the 194th Fusilier Battalion.

The 2d Battalion, 351st Infantry, jumped off from the Minturno cemetery as soon as our artillery concentrations began, with Company F on the west side of the road and Company E on the right. After some difficulty initially with enemy machine-gun fire, the attacking units moved on to Hills 146 and 150, which our men had aptly named the Tits. Part of Company F advanced rapidly past the Left Tit along the western slopes of the ridge with little opposition except for occasional mortar or artillery fire. At 0300, 12 May, this group reached a culvert on the Santa Maria-Tame road, where it was soon exposed to machine-gun and rifle fire from all sides. Company F by this time had penetrated a mile and one-half into the enemy's defenses. Since both flanks and rear were wide open, the men could only dig in about the culvert and wait until dark for help to come or for a withdrawal to the rest of the regiment.

While Company F was moving toward Tame, Company E had met stiff resistance on the slopes east of the road. Forward elements initially by-passed the first enemy machine guns and

drove across the slopes of the Right Tit to the Spur (Hills 157 and 146). Machine guns in houses on the crest of the Spur stopped our men; the company commander was evacuated for wounds; and several platoon commanders fell before the sweeping machine-gun fire on the south side of the Spur. The attack then stalled until the battalion commander, Lt. Col. Raymond E. Kendall, came up. This officer soon discovered that about 12 machine guns in three houses and a bunker on the Spur commanded every approach with overlapping fields of fire. After he had been killed in the attempt to knock out the resistance, the disorganized company dug in at dawn on the south side of the Spur. So far it had had 89 casualties. Company G, which had followed the other two companies of the battalion to deal with by-passed machine guns along the road, came up at this time and joined Company E.

Before daybreak it was clear that the attack of the 2d Battalion had failed, and the 3d Battalion was committed on the west side of the road to operate with Companies E and G in a pincers movement on Santa Maria. For several hours machine-gun fire from Hill 103, just left of the road, held the battalion up, but after daybreak our troops pushed forward toward the hill. The enemy opposition proved to be intense. Eight machine guns in houses and dugouts on the upper slopes of Hill 103 swept every ripple of the ground; even worse, the Germans still held the S Ridge, which had been reported taken by the 338th Infantry, and their machine guns raked our troops from the left flank. The 3d Battalion pushed forward doggedly but was finally halted just before noon on the west and south slopes of Hill 103. Below it the 1st Battalion, 338th Infantry, was also pinned by the same opposition. Renewal of the attack by the 3d Battalion was planned for 1830 but was postponed until the 338th Infantry could take part.

On the crest and other side of the Santa Maria ridge there was no progress throughout the 12th. The infantry, consisting of Companies E and G, were unable to cross the Spur. Three tanks from the 760th Tank Battalion had been immobilized by mines and artillery fire in the night while mopping up enemy machine guns; another five tanks came up the road during the hazy morning, but within an hour three of them were knocked out between the Tits and the Spur. Later another force of tanks advanced beyond the cemetery and eliminated 20 machine-gun and sniper posi-

tions with the aid of the infantry. This attack was halted after an enemy antitank gun in a building along the road had scored direct hits on three tanks. Still another armored attack, north from Tufo early in the morning of the 12th, failed when the leading tanks were bogged in the muddy terrain.

Supporting fires were heavy on either side. Our tanks, tank destroyers, cannon company howitzers, and artillery blasted the enemy lines hour after hour. During the first day of the attack the 913th Field Artillery Battalion alone expended 4,268 rounds on Santa Maria, reducing it to a little Cassino. Meanwhile the enemy battered the 351st Infantry with machine-gun, mortar, and artillery fire. Self-propelled guns from Spigno and heavier-caliber guns from Ausonia kept up a deadly fire. Tanks came up to Tame and harassed both the 351st Infantry and the 338th Infantry on the S Ridge; enemy mortars fired unceasingly; and snipers made it worth a man's life to move.

The enemy lines about Company F, still isolated near Tame, grew ever tighter. The supply of ammunition dwindled, and the batteries of the SCR-300, the only means of communication with the regiment, threatened to go dead at any minute. After sunset the Germans finally tried one of their old ruses. Several of the enemy rose up and came forward, yelling "Kamerad!" When the men of Company F scrambled out of their positions to take the prisoners, the Germans closed in from all sides and wiped out the company. The company commander and over 50 men were captured; a few men escaped by hiding.

Replacements had been brought up after dark for the 351st Infantry, which met a fierce counterattack during the night of 12-13 May. At 1330, 13 May, over 22 Focke-Wulf 190s raided the Minturno-Tremensuoli area. Our attack on the 13th, postponed from dawn, finally jumped off in the afternoon in conjunction with the renewed drive by the 338th Infantry on the S Ridge. The plan of maneuver directed Companies E and G to push up on the right side of the Santa Maria road and the 3d Battalion on the left side. The 1st Battalion, in the draw between the S Ridge and the Santa Maria road, would advance toward Hill 109 on the S Ridge with the further plan of taking Hill 126 and eliminating the enemy resistance in that area.

Though the attack was postponed until 1830, the 2d Battalion did not receive the message and jumped off at 1630. Fighting its way to the top of the Spur, part of the unit was pinned there

by machine-gun fire. When the 3d Battalion attacked, it found that the enemy had apparently intercepted a message giving the time of our attack, for a concentration of 300 to 400 rounds of 88mm fire fell in its zone precisely at 1830. The battalion suffered heavy casualties and made little progress. The 1st Battalion moved in single file up the creek bed below the S Ridge and completed occupation of Hill 109, already partly held by the 338th Infantry, after a battle of several hours to silence the enemy machine guns. Santa Maria, however, still held out at dusk on the 13th, as defiant as ever.

The battle of the 85th Division under Maj. Gen. John B. Coulter was equally protracted and bloody, and almost as limited in success during 11-13 May. Immediately to the left of the 351st Infantry the 338th Infantry under Col. Alfred A. Safay attacked for the S Ridge. In the center of the 85th Division zone the 339th Infantry under Lt. Col. Brookner W. Brady had as its objectives San Martino Hill across Capo d' Acqua Creek and dominating terrain east and north of Scauri. Since all three battalions of the 339th Infantry were to take part in the attack, the 3d Battalion, 337th Infantry, was attached to the regiment as reserve. The remainder of the 337th Infantry, commanded by Col. Oliver W. Hughes, held its lines on the left flank and prepared to assist the other regiments of the division. After taking the S Ridge and San Martino Hill the 85th Division was to cut the Ausonia-Formia road, the main enemy escape route from the lower Ausonia Valley.

The S Ridge, as defined in the fighting of our May drive, is essentially a long nose running in sinuous form southwest from the main hill mass at Tame down to the village of Solacciano. On the east, beyond a narrow creek valley, lies the ridge along which the Minturno-Santa Maria road runs. On the west side is the farm valley of Capo d' Acqua Creek. The entire S Ridge, which rises to a height of 131 meters, is covered with terraced grainfields, olive groves, vineyards, and scattered stone farmhouses, ideal terrain for the enemy defense. The only method of attack open to the 338th Infantry was a frontal assault to the north from our positions above Tremensuoli, the 1st Battalion up the draw on the right for Hill 131 and the 3d Battalion on the left for the ridge to the south of that point.

In the initial attacks both battalions gained only an unsteady foothold on the S Ridge, and advances during the day of the 12th

were scant. By midnight of 12-13 May the 1st Battalion, reduced to 350 effectives, had men on the slopes of Hill 131 and Hills 109 and 103 to the north; the 3d Battalion, hardly able to muster 200 effectives, had dug in at Solacciano. New attacks on the S Ridge in the afternoon of the 13th in conjunction with the 1st Battalion, 351st Infantry, brought little advance except for the push of infantry and tanks of the 756th Tank Battalion north from Solacciano, which gained Hill 85. It was now clear that the main enemy strongpoints were on Hills 126 and 131.

The 2d Battalion, 338th Infantry, attacked across Capo d' Acqua Creek on the 13th through positions of the 339th Infantry and reached Cave d' Argilla and Hill 60 to the south, thus gaining partial control over the Spigno road junction. Both companies had to use every available man and weapon to beat off the immediate counterattacks by an alarmed enemy. Once the Germans fought their way within 25 yards of our positions, but the infantry clung grimly to their foxholes through the sleepless night. At dark on 13 May the position in the zone of the 338th Infantry was little better than in front of Santa Maria. We held Cave d' Argilla, Solacciano, part of Hill 85, and Hill 109; but the machine guns in the enemy strongpoints on Hills 131 and 126 still laid down their deadly belts of crossfire on the draw and Santa Maria road.

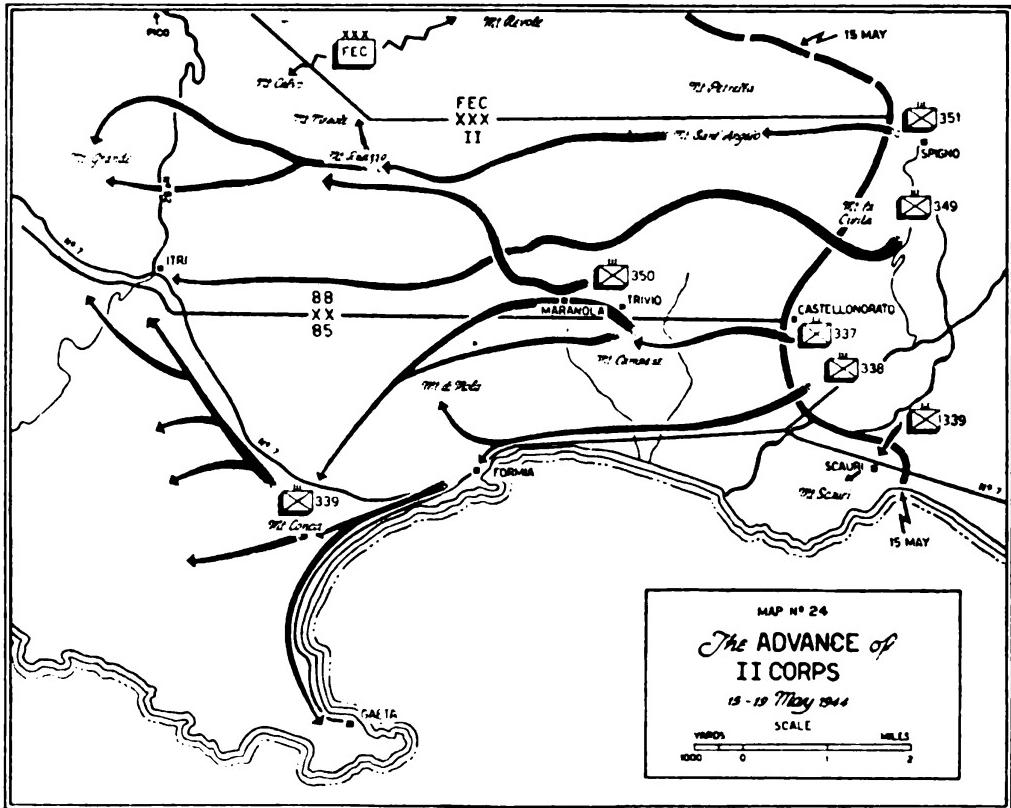
Only in the zone of the 339th Infantry was better progress reported. San Martino Hill, the initial objective of the 3d Battalion, 339th Infantry, consists of two gentle swells in the farmland south of Cave d' Argilla. The western swell is Hill 66; the eastern one, Hill 69, drops 120 feet on its east slope to Capo d' Acqua Creek, a swift little stream about 15 feet wide and 3 feet deep. The seizure of these outwardly insignificant points would thrust a dangerous salient into the enemy's defensive line. Success here, moreover, might bring us command of the Spigno road junction and so sever the only lateral supply route between the German forces on the left and right flanks of II Corps.

Under cover of the initial concentrations, which were thickened by 1,200 rounds from the 2d Chemical Battalion, the 3d Battalion threw its temporary bridge across the creek and dashed up the slopes of Hill 69. The enemy, though surprised, reacted immediately and violently, but within three hours the last German had been killed or captured. The battalion then reorganized and dug in to meet the enemy counterattacks, which began to

came at dawn on the 12th, one after another. All were beaten off with the aid of our artillery, and in the afternoon the 1st Battalion, 337th Infantry, came up to attack for Hill 66; the first effort was repelled by the German infantry and artillery, but in a second try the point was taken after midnight. Enemy artillery and mortar fire fell on San Martino Hill during the remainder of the night; a counterattack came at dawn on the 13th but failed to carry our positions. Exhausted, the enemy remained quiet throughout the day. The remainder of the 339th Infantry had been less fortunate in its operations against the enemy-held hills immediately above Highway 7. The 1st Battalion made small gains toward San Domenico Ridge, and the 2d Battalion on the right became deeply involved on Mt. dei Pensieri; Company F was cut off on the Intermediate Ridge and forced to surrender by the evening of the 13th.

Thus at dusk on 13 May the two-day battle by II Corps had produced mixed results. On the far right the 350th Infantry had been completely successful. In the center we had encountered stiff resistance on the gentle slopes above Minturno, where the enemy automatic weapons had superb fields of fire. The 351st Infantry and the 338th Infantry still lay before the main German strongpoints at Santa Maria and on the S Ridge. Part of the 339th Infantry had gained San Martino Hill; the rest of the regiment had advanced but little beyond its original line of departure. All units had suffered heavy casualties. During the night the commander of the 94th Grenadier Division issued an order of the day claiming that "in spite of several enemy penetrations into our advance positions, the main field of battle remained in our hands."

This claim, however, was not entirely correct. The belt of fortifications in front of II Corps had made our attack a slow, nibbling process, but by dusk of the 13th we had achieved important gains. The Spigno road junction was threatened. The Germans had suffered heavy losses, and the pressure of the wide-scale Allied attack prevented any reinforcement to the enemy in front of II Corps. Above all the entry of the French into the Ausonia Valley imposed an added strain on enemy resources which was clearly too great. Before dawn on 14 May the enemy to the front of II Corps withdrew from all his positions in accordance with an order from the German command to retreat to the Dora Line. Even this position became only a temporary halt-



ing place after the further penetration of the French to Mt. Revole and of the 88th Division to the Itri-Pico road; during the period 14-21 May the enemy made no extensive stand in force in the II Corps zone.

During 14-15 May our troops rapidly mopped up the Gustav Line. The 350th Infantry drove across Mt. I Cerri to Spigno, which the 1st Battalion entered at 0730, 15 May. The 349th Infantry now entered the action and took the south half of Mt. la Civita in the afternoon and evening of the 14th. (See Map 24.) So complete was the disruption of enemy communications that 1 officer and 22 artillerymen of the 194th Artillery Regiment were captured while still firing on our reported positions in the valley. The north peak of the cliff was taken by the 1st and 3d Battalions, 351st Infantry, which mopped up Santa Maria in the morning, reorganized, and attacked across the valley at 1500. The next morning, 15 May, both the 349th and 351st Infantry drove on into the mountains and so gained firm control of the south shoulder of the Spigno gap, through which the French Mountain Corps poured in the afternoon.

Advance in the 85th Division zone was initially entrusted to the 337th Infantry, while the 339th Infantry held its positions

along the coast and the 338th Infantry reorganized on the S Ridge. Casualties of the latter had been 55 killed, 365 wounded, and 29 missing. The 337th Infantry pushed across the Spigno road junction on the 14th and in the afternoon of the 15th launched an attack for Castellonorato; by midnight it was 400 yards beyond the town. Some of our large bag of prisoners reported receiving no supplies for the past two days. The 3d Battalion, 338th Infantry, advanced on the left flank of the 337th Infantry, mopping up the last bunkers of the main German defenses, and reached the junction of Highway 7 and the Ausonia road.

In reviewing the situation on 15 May it was clear that our troops had broken the back of the immediate German resistance in the Ausonia Valley. From prisoner-of-war reports and the abundance of German bodies and equipment strewn across the hills, our command could deduce that the 71st Grenadier Division had almost ceased to exist and that the 94th Grenadier Division was badly crippled. Already the French and American units in Fifth Army had taken over 2,200 prisoners. Further opposition in our zone, accordingly, would be much reduced. New orders from General Clark directed the 88th Division to push rapidly through the Petrella massif to Itri. The 85th Division would not be used west of Mt. Campese without Army approval, and it was contemplated that both this division and II Corps headquarters might move to the Anzio front by water in the near future.

The men of II Corps, having broken the Gustav Line, pressed their advantage against the retreating 94th Grenadier Division and took up the pursuit in earnest on the 16th. Victory was in the air, and everywhere behind the lines was feverish activity. The trails and roads began to fill with streams of men, mule trains, trucks, tanks, and tank destroyers moving west. Corps artillery, which had begun displacing forward as early as the night of 13-14 May, was now all in advanced positions and kept leapfrogging battalions and even batteries within battalions to keep its pieces within range of the enemy. Everywhere dust churned up by moving vehicles and marching men rose in white clouds.

The 85th Division actually continued its advance up the Formia corridor, beating back enemy rear guards to reach Formia at noon of the 17th and Gaeta on the 19th. In the mountains above, the 351st Infantry led the 88th Division drive toward Itri. The

1st and 3d Battalions were on the slopes above Spigno on the afternoon of the 15th, when Colonel Champeny received orders to continue the advance to the west. Two native guides were procured, and the regiment set out along the ten miles of steep and rocky mountain slopes between Spigno and its goal at Itri. By late afternoon on the next day our men had reached Mt. Ruazzo (1319 meters). Though the two battalions had completely outrun their communications, pack trains, and artillery, they were ready to continue the drive on the 17th. At 1300 they moved down the draw on the west slopes of Mt. Ruazzo to capture Mt. Grande (766 meters) across the Itri-Pico road, but a strong delaying force on the hills west of the Itri valley blocked our attempt to cut off the German withdrawal up Highway 7. Fire from self-propelled guns, tanks, mortars, and snipers was extremely heavy and inflicted severe casualties in the 3d Battalion. Though without artillery support, the battalions of the 351st Infantry reorganized and attacked again after dark, but were stopped by tanks along the Itri-Pico road.

Throughout the 18th the battalions were forced to remain on the defensive under intense artillery fire. The pack trains struggling across the mountains had not yet reached the regiment and supplies of ammunition, rations, and water were critically low. Welcome relief came at 1700 in the form of fire from the 240-mm howitzers of the 697th Field Artillery Battalion, which effectively silenced the German tanks. The 601st Field Artillery Battalion (Pack) arrived and added its close support and the 2d Battalion finally caught up with the regiment.

The 350th Infantry (less one battalion) had moved in two convoys to Trivio on the late afternoon of the 17th, advanced to Maranola on foot, then trudged across the hills to positions south of the 351st Infantry. On the morning of the 19th the 351st Infantry launched a final attack on Mt. Grande under the fire of the 350th Infantry. The 1st Battalion, 351st Infantry, moved out at 0200 to make a wide swing to the right and strike Mt. Grande from the northeast. Reaching the Itri-Pico road at daybreak, advance elements wiped out one machine-gun nest and speedily occupied the north half of the regimental objective. The 3d Battalion drove straight across the highway at daylight and took the south half of the mountain. Opposition was slight, for the Germans had withdrawn. Shortly after a patrol of the 351st Infantry had taken the last German stragglers in Itri the

349th Infantry, which had made a forced march across the mountains, entered the town.

The brief German stand for Itri had been carried out by a miscellaneous group of units. West of Maranola our troops had met the 620th Ost Battalion, a mixture of Russian ex-prisoners and German noncommissioned and commissioned officers. This unit had failed to stand up under our drive. Elements of the 1st and 3d Battalions, 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, were also encountered in the Itri area, and on the 19th we crushed a company formed from the supply personnel of the 94th Grenadier Division. With Itri and Mt. Grande in our hands, the Germans were forced to fall back on Fondi. In eight days II Corps had completed the mission assigned to it by the Fifth Army order.

#### 4. THE ENEMY REACTION TO OUR ATTACK

Though the individual German soldiers fought bravely against our onslaught, the enemy reaction as a whole was one of complete surprise. The Allied plan of deception had been successful in every aspect, and the noise of heavy motor movements behind our lines during the week prior to our attack was misinterpreted by enemy observers as the relief of front-line units by reserves. Fate itself seemed to delude the Germans; one Moroccan rifleman deserted to the enemy the night of 10-11 May and revealed that we would launch a big attack the following night, but his statements were not credited. The commander of XIV Panzer Corps had for some reason picked 2400, 24 May, as the earliest possible date for our offensive and so informed his troops in an order urging every man to be a "Cassino fighter."

The initial surprise due to the timing of our attack was increased by the violence and accuracy of our artillery fire. Prisoners agreed that their command knew only the locations of our artillery which had previously fired. The continuous daylight smoke screen masked final movement of our guns into position, and our customary mortar fire on enemy artillery observation posts forced the observers to remain under cover. The effectiveness of our H-hour concentrations was increased by our exact knowledge of German positions, by the accurate, massive, and speedy shelling, and by the wider bursting radius of shells hitting on the rocky terrain. Around-the-clock firing on our part further heightened German demoralization.

The initial bombardment and subsequent fire were devastating to the enemy. Intercepted messages and prisoner reports indicated that the German communications were disrupted. Telephone lines were knocked out, and wiremen could not repair the gaps during the continuous shelling; command posts themselves were neutralized in many instances. The relative lightness of German counterbattery and harassing fires was due partly to the heavy damage to the enemy artillery, partly to the shortage in artillery ammunition and to fear of our retaliation. Since the guns of the two infantry divisions before us were largely horse-drawn, their mobility was reduced, and the curtain of fire on enemy rear routes impeded the withdrawal of the artillery after our breakthrough. As a result the Germans were forced to rely to a great extent on self-propelled guns and tanks for artillery support.

The evaluation by Marshal Kesselring of the first week of our attack furnishes clear illumination of the German difficulties as our drive progressed. Time and time again these remarks stress the fact that movement by day and by night behind the German lines was close to impossible. Antitank weapons must be emplaced, it is stated, in their final positions before the attack takes place, for "mobile reserves, which proved so effective on the eastern front, result in heavy losses and cannot be used in combat against the Anglo-Americans with their great superiority in artillery." Even when emplaced, guns could not open fire until the target was very close on penalty of being put out of commission immediately by our concentrated fire.

Likewise, infantry reserves were necessarily kept very close to endangered sectors, for our aerial artillery observation and general aerial superiority made troop movements in the day costly. If such movements were absolutely necessary, it was recommended that the troops be split into small groups. The supply of front-line units was hampered by our interdiction of the narrow passes and bridges behind the lines; at some points the last five to six miles were covered by mules and carriers, with consequent loss of time.

Most surprising of all is the confession that the German High Command, which had scored so many of its successes in the past by attacking in "impassable terrain," was caught in the same trap by our drive. Kesselring noted that German strongpoints were by-passed as widely as possible. "On these occasions the

enemy penetrated often through mountainous terrain, which had previously been considered impassable." The performance of our tanks and vehicles in such terrain was astoundingly good, and the fact that they frequently surprised the Germans brought the recommendation that close antitank weapons be kept ready even in sectors where the employment of German tanks seemed impossible.

Early in June our troops captured the greater part of the intelligence files of the German Fourteenth Army. Among the items was the intelligence map for May 12, which indicated the German knowledge of our positions and thus part of the basis for the enemy dispositions. The well-nigh incredible misinformation of the German intelligence staff helps to show why the German command in Italy was caught flatfooted on the higher levels of planning.

The enemy underestimated our strength in the area of the main attack by Fifth and Eighth Armies by no less than seven divisions, created divisions which did not exist, and badly misplaced higher headquarters. As a result of the faulty locations and undervaluation of our front-line strength, the Germans believed we had much larger reserves in the rear. The 3d Algerian Division was put at Salerno, and the 36th Division was reported to have practiced landing exercises at Pozzuoli on 7 May with armored formations. The German command seems to have drawn the obvious conclusion that our drive on the southern front was a diversion and that we intended again to land in his rear. This fear had exercised the German generals ever since our Salerno landings, and had certainly been reinforced by our thrust at Anzio in January. To meet this threat the minimum number of enemy divisions was in the line on 11 May, and the reserve divisions were disposed largely along the west coast around Anzio and to the north of the Tiber. By the time the Germans decided that their fears of a landing were groundless, our attack had progressed so far that the reserves were drawn in and destroyed piecemeal.

The intelligence files just mentioned reveal that all four French divisions had been identified by 17 May through prisoners and radio intercepts. By the 23d all units on the Allied front were known, though German intelligence was still manufacturing new divisions. Even before their information was complete, however, the Germans had taken steps to remedy the situation to the best of their ability.

The Gustav Line had been broken by the FEC within twenty-four hours of the opening of the offensive, and within another day the 71st Grenadier Division was eliminated as an organized fighting force. The important north-south road from San Giorgio to Highway 7 was irrevocably cut on the 15th. This penetration, coupled with the collapse of the 71st Grenadier Division, seriously compromised the position of the 94th Grenadier Division, which had put up a stiff fight for Santa Maria. The division had to withdraw as the far element in a vast line pivoting back from Cassino, and withdrawal at the end of the whip was a mission which the 94th Grenadier Division, with its horse-drawn equipment, was ill qualified to fulfill. The 276th Grenadier Regiment was committed to cover the disengagement, and both the 1st and 3d Battalions, 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, played brief supporting parts about Itri; but the 94th Grenadier Division was steadily disintegrating as it relinquished Formia, Gaeta, and Itri.

Meanwhile the gap left by the 71st Grenadier Division had to be filled if the Adolf Hitler Line were to be of any use to the forces in the Liri Valley, already backing to this second defensive line under stern pressure from Eighth Army. Various reconnaissance battalions, engineer troops, and the like were tossed into the line in front of the French from 13 May on, but the small increments fell swiftly to our onrush. The 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, the only reserve of Tenth Army, was required in the valley to help the formations in front of Eighth Army.

In the face of this combination of emergencies the enemy command detached the 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment from the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division and threw it in south of the Liri to counterattack from the hills dominating the approaches to Esperia. The regiment was committed piecemeal, with no opportunity for orientation or preparation of positions, and was easily overpowered. After the fall of Esperia on 17 May the French pressed on toward the southern anchor of the Hitler Line and threatened to cut off the retreat of the enemy forces in the Liri Valley. With so much at stake, the German command had no alternative but to summon the 26th Panzer Division from Sezze to stop the French. On the 18th our troops met its 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, and on the following day the veteran German division began the defense of Pico.

From the German point of view the situation was not yet

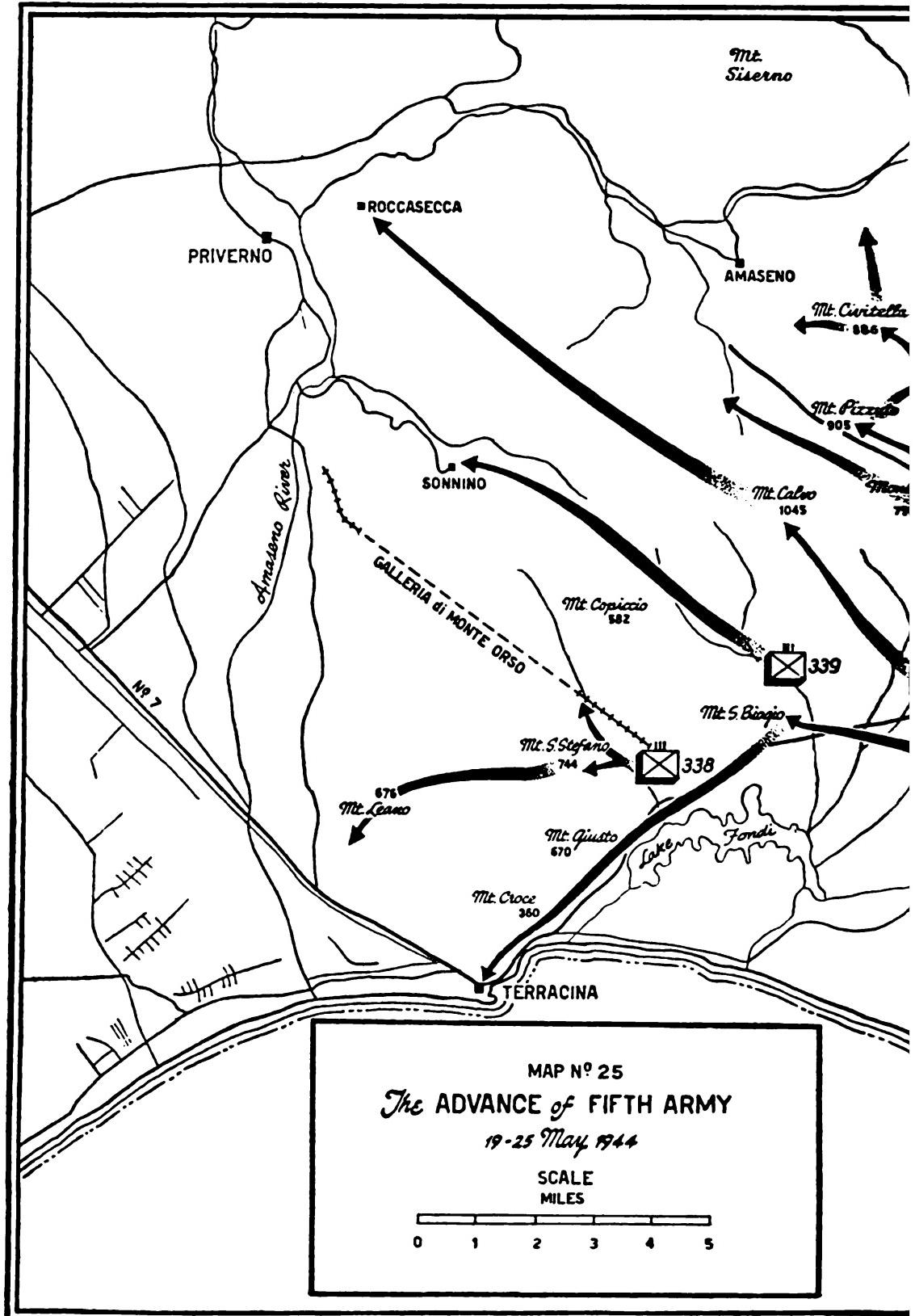
lost on 19 May, but it was gravely critical. The right flank by the sea was reeling back under the pressure of two strong American divisions; the French penetration had not been stopped; and the German ability to hold the Hitler Line from Pico to Pontecorvo was certainly in question. The feeble Luftwaffe had done its best by attacking the Rapido bridges of Eighth Army on the night of the 13th, Naples on the morning of the 14th, and the bridges over the Garigliano and Rapido on the nights of the 15th and 17th; but the attacking planes were too few—varying from 10 to 30 per night—to do any serious damage. Our communications were unimpaired, and the enemy could not stop our preparations to attack the Hitler Line.

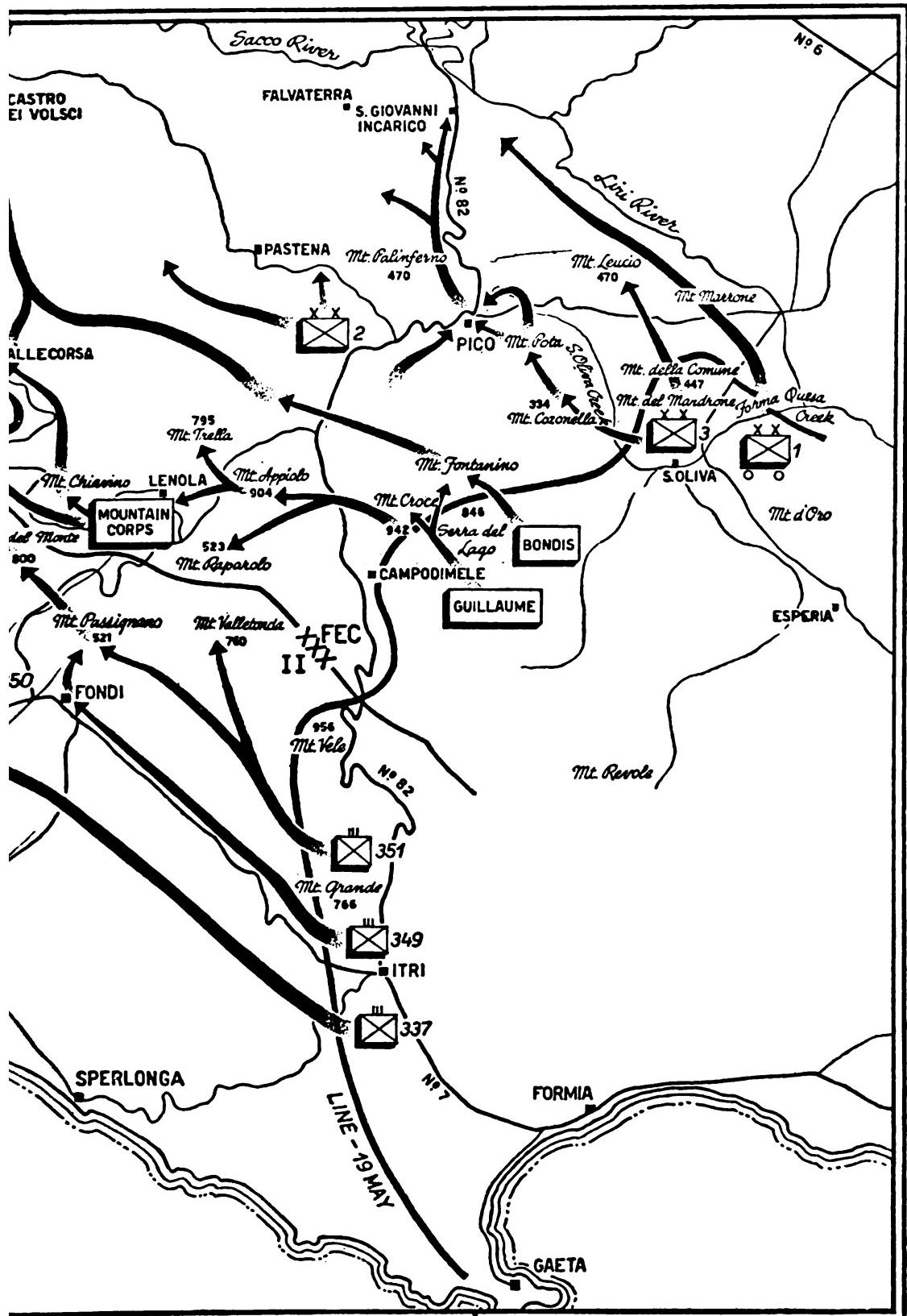
## 5. JUNCTION WITH THE BEACHHEAD

20-25 May 1944

By 19 May Fifth Army had essentially completed the mission assigned in its initial attack order. Our front lay along the Itri-Pico road as far north as Campodimele; the right flank had pushed through the Ausonia Defile and was so far ahead of Eighth Army that it threatened the enemy in the Liri Valley from the rear. II Corps still had the 85th and 88th Divisions in the line but had not been forced to request the commitment of the 36th Division. The FEC had employed all four of its divisions; on the 19th the *tabors*, the 4th Mountain Division, the 3d Algerian Division, and the 1st Motorized Division were engaged, and the 2d Moroccan Division was resting in corps reserve.

Fresh instructions were necessary, and were issued on 18 May to carry Fifth Army forward for the next few days while a major decision in strategy was being made. The problem in question was that of the direction in which the Fifth Army forces on the southern front should attack after breaching the Hitler Line: northwest toward the beachhead, or more northward toward Ceprano and Frosinone. If Eighth Army continued to meet the stubborn resistance it had encountered through 16 May, assistance from Fifth Army would be necessary. Furthermore, the stubbornness of German opposition in the Liri Valley, if continued, offered a possibility of trapping considerable bodies of the enemy before Eighth Army. The Fifth Army order of the 18th accordingly directed the FEC to take Pico and then be prepared to advance to the northwest to cut Highway 6 in the





vicinity of Ceprano or to advance west to secure the Siserno hill mass. (*See Map 25.*) II Corps would take Fondi and thereafter be ready to swing northwest on the Fondi-Lenola-Castro dei Volsci axis, or to continue west toward Terracina. By orders from AAI on the 18th the general shift of Fifth Army to the north would take place if Eighth Army had not drawn abreast by the time we took Pico.

Further consideration of the general strategic picture in the next few days indicated that Eighth Army probably would be successful in breaking the Hitler Line without the assistance of both II Corps and the FEC. As late as 23 May the FEC was still prepared to strike toward Ceprano if the Eighth Army attack of that date did not smash the Hitler Line, but II Corps had begun by the 21st to devote its energies to opening up Highway 7 through the bottleneck of Terracina, where the hills come down to the sea and so divide the Fondi and Pontine plains. The decision to direct II Corps on Terracina was largely motivated by reasons of logistics. Ever since his orders of 15 May General Clark had planned to transfer part or all of II Corps to the beachhead to reinforce the eventual attack of VI Corps. That order had contemplated movement by water, but the shortage of landing craft interposed serious difficulties. The transfer of the 36th Division to Anzio, which had been ordered on the 18th, had required four days, 18-22 May. The shift of the 85th Division would take anywhere up to a week, and in addition transport would have to be provided for a number of battalions of corps artillery, hospitals, and service units, all alerted on 19-21 May. To assemble a considerable part of II Corps at Anzio by water might require until the early days of June and so might tie up a large part of our troops when they were most needed at the beachhead. The supply needs of the enlarged beachhead force would tax our water transport even further.

The alternative was to continue the attack of II Corps up Highway 7 to open a land route to the beachhead, and so move troops and supplies by land. The disintegration of the German forces in front of Fifth Army, which had permitted the original plan to shift II Corps to Anzio, had proceeded at an increased rate after 15 May. By the 20th it was certain that the enemy could not make a stand short of Terracina; without substantial reinforcements, the Germans could hardly stop even there. Accordingly General Clark released the 85th Division to II Corps

for full employment with the instructions that II Corps drive through Terracina and open up Highway 7 to the beachhead with the utmost rapidity.<sup>5</sup>

General Keyes' orders called for the 88th Division to drive across the hills northwest of Fondi toward Roccagorga while the 85th Division moved on its left flank through Monte San Biagio, Sonnino, and Priverno and also smashed through the Terracina bottleneck. The advance, which had reached Itri on the 19th, hardly halted. The 349th Infantry moved out from Itri shortly after midnight and rapidly led the 88th Division push up Highway 7 throughout the morning of the 20th. The leading battalion stopped every two hours and was passed through by the succeeding battalions in order to give the men brief periods of rest. Behind the regiment came the 350th Infantry; ahead, the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron under Lt. Col. Charles A. Ellis ranged over the Fondi plain, but one troop which entered Fondi was forced out by the enemy rear guard. By aggressive, swift action, the 3d Battalion, 349th Infantry, took Fondi in the afternoon. Our reinforcements now began to stream up Highway 7, so that late in the afternoon the road from Itri to Fondi was filled with trucks, armor, and artillery, and both sides were lined with marching men.

The 88th Division now drove northwest across the mountains above the Fondi Plain to Mt. Calvo on the 21st and to Mt. Monsicardi on the 22d. By its dash and aggressiveness the division prevented the enemy from getting set in the Hitler Line in the region, and did not give him time to bring up sufficient reinforcements to stem the tide. The mountain positions which our troops gained north and northwest of Fondi protected the displacement forward of corps artillery and also the attack by the 85th Division on the stubborn enemy garrison at Terracina. By this time II Corps and the FEC were again in contact; indeed, the 88th Division had drawn well ahead of the French left flank, which was driving toward Vallecorsa against heavy rear-guard action. II Corps accordingly ordered the division to hold and improve its gains, while pushing an advance guard northwest to Roccasecca dei Volsci. The 350th Infantry reached this point on 23 May.

On 20 May the 85th Division, which was to take Terracina, continued to clear the hills south of Highway 7 between Sperlonga and Gaeta. The following day the 1st Battalion, 338th In-

fantry, turned itself on corps orders into nautical infantry by embarking at Gaeta in DUKWs and sailing 11 miles along the coast to Sperlonga; to the north the 337th Infantry drove across the Fondi plain to Monte San Biagio and the hills above Terracina. The 1st Battalion, preceded by elements of the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, raced down Highway 7 toward Terracina. Advanced parties of the infantry fought their way to points within a mile of the town, but by 0230, 22 May, were forced to retreat to Mt. Croce (360 meters) under deadly German automatic-weapons fire.

The stiff enemy resistance was quickly explained when the first prisoners revealed that the 15th and 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiments of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division had been brought down from north of Rome and were now facing the 85th Division. The German command had thus committed one more of its few veteran reserve divisions. Unlike the 26th Panzer Division, which had been able to reach the Pico battle in time to slow the FEC materially, the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division arrived too late after its long march to prevent us from getting a foothold in the hills north of Terracina. As a result its stand was hopeless from the beginning, though the struggle to oust it from Terracina town was to last another two days.

The news of enemy reinforcements clearly necessitated a heavier attack on our part, for which preparations were made throughout the night of 21-22 May and on the following morning. The bulk of the corps artillery had moved forward on the 21st to positions south of Fondi; on the 22d the other battalions displaced to the same area, and some pieces were advanced even closer to the front lines. At daylight on the 22d the 1st Battalion, 337th Infantry, discovered that German troops had infiltrated into its positions on Mt. Croce. Withdrawal was immediately necessary, and the mountain was soon bristling with enemy machine guns. The 3d Battalion rushed up and together with the 1st Battalion on the left jumped off at 1530 to drive over Mt. Croce and down the south slopes into Terracina. This battle went on throughout the afternoon with the 1st Battalion bearing the brunt of the effort. Our men had to fight for every inch of the rocky terrain, pressing forward in short rushes or crawling from boulder to boulder to wipe out snipers and machine-gun nests one by one. Mortar and artillery fire from behind Terracina was intense, and the enemy resisted fanatically,

often holding out until his positions were overrun and he was killed manning his gun. By dark our advance elements were over the mountain and were forcing their way down the slopes toward the cemetery a mile north of the town. The 1st Battalion, having fought for thirty-six hours without rest, was too exhausted to continue.

The 2d Battalion relieved it and together with the 3d Battalion and the 760th Tank Battalion attacked at 0800, 23 May, down the slopes of Mt. Croce. The enemy resistance was as fierce as ever, but by crawling and infiltrating forward the men of the 2d and 3d Battalions were at the outskirts of Terracina by midnight. The enemy stand for Terracina was almost over. The 337th Infantry was at the entrance to the town, and the 338th Infantry, which was committed on the 22d to attack across Mt. Santo Stefano, was making good progress toward Mt. Leano and the German escape route up Highway 7.

Farther away, other movements of our troops were drawing a noose about not only the garrison of Terracina but also all the German troops in the Pontine Marshes. The 339th Infantry had moved along Highway 7 from Fondi in the night of 21-22 May, halted for the 22d at the edge of the mountains, and on the 23d advanced over extremely rugged terrain to surprise and capture much of the 3d Battalion, 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, at Sonnino. By late afternoon our troops stood at a point threatening the enemy escape route through Priverno. Even more dangerous was the beginning of the beachhead offensive on 23 May, aimed at cutting Highway 7 near Cisterna and then Highway 6 near Valmontone. Our initial successes in this push forced the enemy before II Corps into a race to clear out of the Lepini Mountains before his escape route was barred at Valmontone. During the night of 23-24 May the 2d Battalion, 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, and the 103d Reconnaissance Battalion evacuated Terracina; thereafter II Corps action again became the pursuit of a fleeing enemy.

Our attack on Terracina had been pressed relentlessly, for much depended upon its successful and speedy conclusion. If II Corps were held up before the town beyond a certain point, its subsequent transfer to the Anzio beachhead would be delayed, and the success of our drive on Rome might thereby be imperiled. Spurred on by imperative orders, the 85th Division had smashed through the bottleneck in good time; before dawn on

the 24th patrols of the 337th Infantry entered the town and reported the enemy withdrawal. The three battalions of the regiment closed in speedily while the 338th Infantry advanced to Mt. Leano. By 0800 Terracina was completely in our hands.

Engineers entered Terracina with the infantry and hastily bulldozed a path. The first units pushed through were some artillery batteries to protect further advance; then about 1000 the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, with the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron attached, cleared the town to fan out on all roads in the Pontine Marshes in the race to Anzio. Delay was caused chiefly by heavy demolitions, for the enemy had already evacuated this sector. Our engineers worked feverishly to by-pass all obstacles, and Cub planes which reconnoitered the routes of advance reported that Italian civilians were assisting us by filling craters ahead of our troops. On the beach-head side the Brett Force, composed of the 1st Battalion, 36th Engineers, tank destroyers, and elements of the 1 Reconnaissance Regiment of the British 1 Division, moved out at 0305, 25 May. After daylight on the 25th the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron made contact at a number of points below Borgo Grappa with the Brett Force, beginning at 0731.

Two weeks after D-day on the southern front the two sections of Fifth Army had joined. The isolated Anzio beachhead, the maintenance of which had been one of the most heroic stories of the Fifth Army campaign in Italy, had existed 125 days. Highway 7 was opened immediately, and supplies began to flow from the southern dumps to support the drive on Rome. The shift of II Corps, however, was delayed until the FEC could pull up on its right flank. For the next few days the 85th Division continued to garrison the area about Sonnino, while the 88th Division held the long ridge from Mt. Monsicardi northwest to Roccasecca.

## 6. THE FEC DRIVE THROUGH PICO

20-25 May 1944

The FEC drive had been slowed considerably by the battle for the important point of Pico, at the junction of roads from Pontecorvo, Ceprano, and Itri. By the afternoon of 19 May the FEC front formed a quarter circle around the Pico area, extending from Mt. della Comune and Mt. del Mandrone on the east of Pico to Serra del Lago and Campodimele on the south. Three

divisions were in the line: the 1st Motorized Division on the right below Pontecorvo; the 3d Algerian Division in the center, west of Sant' Oliva; and the 4th Mountain Division in the hills to the left. The *tobors* of the Mountain Corps held the extreme left about Campodimele.

The FEC was thus in position to launch concentric drives on the objective from east and south. Plans had been laid as early as the 17th, and much of the French operations during 17-19 May had been executed in accordance with these plans. Primary responsibility for taking Pico was assigned to the 3d Algerian Division, already pushing west on the Esperia-Sant' Oliva axis, but the division was warned that it might also have Ceprano as its next objective. While the 3d Algerian Division blocked the east, secured Pico, and pressed on toward Ceprano, the 1st Motorized Division would provide protection to the right flank by advancing along the Liri River until such time as Eighth Army came abreast of the 3d Algerian Division. Then the 1st Motorized Division would pass to corps reserve. On the left flank the 4th Mountain Division and the groups of *tobors* would guard the attack on Pico; this Mountain Corps was also assigned the mission of gaining an initial foothold on the Pastena and Lenola roads in preparation for a possible advance westward to the Siserno hill mass. Elements of the 756th Tank Battalion, which was attached to the FEC on 19 May, moved up through Itri and set to work with tank destroyers, reconnaissance troops, and engineers attached to clear the enemy self-propelled guns on the Itri-Pico road and to spearhead the drive along the road from Campodimele to Pico.

The plans of the FEC were carefully made, for the operation against Pico was a major one. With the Gustav Line broken and the FEC threatening the Hitler Line, the enemy had issued an order at 1800, 19 May, to all his troops remaining in the area south of the Liri and east of Pico to fall back to the Pico-Pontecorvo line. To support these scattered remnants the bulk of the veteran 26th Panzer Division was already in position under stringent orders to hold on to Pico as long as possible. The enemy's only hope now was to salvage the remnants of the German Tenth Army in the south for a stand on the Velletri-Avezzano line, but to gain time for such a withdrawal the main enemy forces in the Liri Valley had to make a temporary stand on the Hitler Line. If they were to hold at all, it was vital to delay the French below

the Liri River. German opposition accordingly proved much more severe before the FEC than before II Corps in the period 20-25 May.

During the 20th the 3d Algerian Infantry took Mt. Leucio in the Liri Valley and so cut the Pico-Pontecorvo road. The 7th Algerian Infantry, which had been stopped in the morning by fire from Mt. Leucio, then surged across the valley of Forma di Sant' Oliva Creek and won the crests of Mt. Cozonella and Mt. Pota from the 334th Fusilier Battalion before dark. Heavy fire from Pico halted this push, but patrols were sent down the west slopes of Mt. Pota toward the town. To the left the Guillaume Group (4th Group of *Tabors* reinforced) and the Bondis Group (3d Group of *Tabors* reinforced) of the Mountain Corps moved north along the east side of the Itri-Pico road so as to bring pressure on Pico from the south; a third group, the Cherrière (1st Group of *Tabors* reinforced), crossed the Itri-Pico road and made preliminary demonstrations toward Lenola.

On the following day the battle for Pico really began, accompanied by a push of the 1st Motorized Division on San Giovanni Incarico on the right and a drive of the Guillaume Group west toward Lenola on the left. The 7th Algerian Infantry raced down the north slopes of Mt. Pota, crossed the Pico-Pontecorvo road under fire from enemy guns in the eastern outskirts of the town, and entered the orchards on Campo dei Morti east of Pico. By noon it had mopped up these slopes despite heavy enemy fire. Two companies descended into Pico itself against fierce enemy resistance which threatened to produce a counterattack with artillery and armored support.

Though the French forces had seemingly gained a foothold in the outskirts of Pico at the approach of dusk, the enemy resistance had not slackened, and the battle was far from over on the front of the FEC. Off to the northeast an enemy force of 50 tanks moving along the north bank of the Liri toward Pontecorvo opened fire at 1430 on the 1st Brigade, 1st Motorized Division, as it fanned out over the valley floor. The artillery of the division and of 1 Canadian Corps, just north of the Liri, put down heavy concentrations which forced the tanks to withdraw; fighter-bombers summoned to the scene continued the attack and inflicted some damage. The enemy, however, was not daunted. Under cover of dusk ten enemy tanks and a battalion of infantry moved southeast along the Liri and at 1830 struck the extended

point of the 1st Brigade, which had reached the area just south of San Giovanni. The fierceness of the assault forced our troops to give way, and the battle rolled slowly south in the gathering darkness. The French troops, spread out between Mt. Leucio and Pontecorvo, fought bravely, as the enemy tanks stabbed relentlessly at their loose formations on the gently rolling floor of the Liri Valley. Four times the leading companies of the 1st Brigade counterattacked in an effort to stabilize the line; three times they failed, but finally about midnight the French established a line between Mt. Leucio and Mt. Marrone and held it firmly despite Nebelwerfer and 88mm fire.

Another force of 20 enemy tanks supported by infantry appeared just before midnight west of Mt. Leucio, attacked the 7th Algerian Infantry elements on Campo dei Morti, and pushed them back toward Mt. Pota. At Pico a force of 22 tanks, including at least two Tiger tanks, attacked the two infantry companies in the outskirts of the town. All these thrusts, aimed at blunting the FEC drive, were determined; and everywhere the French had to yield ground. Nevertheless, we still held Mt. Leucio and thus a grasp on the Pico-Pontecorvo road. At Pico the infantry fought vigorously to maintain the foothold established in the afternoon; finally about midnight the tanks of the 755th Tank Battalion drove in to the south of Pico and forced the enemy armor to stop its attack.

After the enemy tanks had been driven back, the two companies of the 7th Algerian Infantry in the outskirts of the town were withdrawn under threat of encirclement. Early the next morning, 22 May, the regiment reported indications of an enemy withdrawal and again pressed forward to Campo dei Morti and the south side of Pico. At 1130 the regiment broke into the town from the east. The Cherrière Group of the Mountain Corps, freed from its holding mission east of Lenola by the advance of the Guillaume Group, moved north along the Itri-Pico road and entered the western edge of Pico about noon. Together the two units proceeded to mop up the remainder of the German garrison, which had been greatly weakened by the withdrawal of the enemy tanks. By 1540 Pico was definitely in the hands of the FEC.

On the left the Mountain Corps had continued its attack on Lenola during the day against mounting resistance. The Guillaume Group already controlled the heights to the east and south

of the village and gained contact with II Corps at the road junction just south of Lenola, thus linking up the Fifth Army front in this area for the first time. The armored group operating on the Itri-Pico road with the Mountain Corps destroyed the enemy self-propelled guns at the Lenola-Pico road junction during the morning. When his flanks had been secured by these actions, General Guillaume began his attack in the early afternoon. Before dusk the heights north of Lenola had been taken; by 1900 the village itself was in our hands with 250 prisoners. The majority of the garrison from the 2d Battalion, 276th Grenadier Regiment, and other units had surrendered after a bitter fight, for the 88th Division had cut its escape route to Vallacorsa by occupying Mt. Chiavino and Cima del Monte.

Dusk of the 22d essentially marked the completion of the battle for Pico. Though the area had not yet been entirely cleared of its stubborn defenders, the key points were in our hands, and the FEC line ran from Lenola northeast through the hills west of Pico to Mt. Leucio. This advance placed French troops behind the Hitler Line and marked the collapse of that defensive position; the 26th Panzer Division had withdrawn to the northwest and the forces before Eighth Army in the Liri Valley were already beginning to pull out.

On the following morning VI Corps began its attack out of the beachhead, and Eighth Army attacked through the Hitler Line. In conjunction with these drives the FEC attacked at 0600 for Ceprano and Castro dei Volsci. Gains during the 23d were scant, for fresh enemy troops, consisting this time of the 755th and 756th Grenadier Regiments from the Adriatic, had again appeared to our front and had apparently received the sacrifice mission of holding the FEC by counterattacks toward Pico until the Hitler Line could be completely evacuated. Opposition also flared up in Pico itself, where pockets of the enemy delayed our reinforcements for part of the day.

Failure to break through on the first day did not deter the French, and our forces continued the attack on the 24th. The offensive was now split more definitely into two drives, one by the 3d Algerian Division and the 2d Moroccan Division, which was committed on the 23d, north toward Ceprano and Pastena and the other by the Mountain Corps northwest into the area between Castro dei Volsci and Amaseno. In this area the 1st Group of *Tabor*s on Mt. Pizzuto was counterattacked at noon

on the 24th and lost the crest, but the 1st Battalion, 351st Infantry, pushed northwest from Mt. Monsicardi and helped the *goumiers* regain the summit. Vallecorsa proved to be the center of enemy resistance before the Mountain Corps; throughout the night of 24-25 May an armor-and-infantry battle raged inside the village, but with assistance from II Corps artillery the FEC gained final possession of the point on the morning of the 25th. By dark on this date advance elements of the 3d Algerian Division entered San Giovanni on the right flank.

Thereafter the German battle became only a delaying action in front of the FEC, designed to hold open the routes of escape for the enemy in front of II Corps on the west and Eighth Army on the east. During the Pico battle the German command had made vigorous efforts to prevent the French from advancing through the Hitler Line and the hills beyond, and had by its reinforcements indicated its view of the importance of the French drive. The 26th Panzer Division had made the Pico stand, and had been completely defeated. Two regiments of the 334th Grenadier Division had been brought from the Adriatic to San Giovanni and now too were retreating. Again the FEC had fulfilled the mission assigned to it. Though its success this time had little influence on the actual progress of II Corps except insofar as the American divisions could not be transferred to the beachhead until the French were up, the French penetration was of marked importance in facilitating the advance of Eighth Army in the Liri Valley.

The attack of Eighth Army in the May drive was more closely integrated with that of Fifth Army than at any previous time in the Italian campaign. For its efforts Eighth Army under General Leese employed four corps and ten divisions. The plans called for 10 Corps with one division in the Atina area to demonstrate in the initial attacks; 2 Polish Corps to commit two divisions to outflank the Abbey of Montecassino and cut Highway 6; 13 Corps with four divisions to force the crossing of the Rapido River; and 1 Canadian Corps with two divisions to follow closely behind 13 Corps. (See Map 20.) Army reserve consisted of the 6 South African Armoured Division. The strategy remained essentially the same as in the initial Fifth Army attack of January 1944, but exactly twice the force was employed at the outset and five more divisions were available to reinforce the thrust.

The attacks by 2 Polish Corps in the hills above Cassino were brave, costly, and completely unsuccessful. 13 Corps, however, managed to cross the Rapido with two divisions on 11-12 May and pushed slowly up the Liri Valley; by the evening of the 16th it held a bridgehead two miles deep at a cost of 4,056 casualties. Cassino was thus outflanked, and troops of the British 4 Infantry Division took its mine-studded rubble at 1300, 18 May. The Abbey fell to the 3 Carpathian Division on the same day, and 2 Polish Corps mopped up the hills to Piedimonte. By this time the FEC on the south bank of the Liri was six miles ahead of Eighth Army, and the general line of the Allied forces in Italy had assumed the shape which it retained for the next two months: a slanting front with the left flank always forward of the center, and this in turn ahead of the right flank. Our troops on the Adriatic and in the central mountains were so weak that they could only follow up the enemy whenever he retreated. The main bulk of Eighth Army, fighting across the streams in the Liri Valley, was slowed considerably by difficulties of bridging and supply. As a result the right flank of Fifth Army was exposed after the first few days of the attack and remained exposed during the subsequent push past Rome.

Since the FEC threatened the German flank in the Liri Valley, the enemy forces in that area proceeded on 18-19 May to retreat into the Hitler Line from Pontecorvo to Piedimonte. For the attack on this line Eighth Army used 1 Canadian Corps on the left and 13 Corps on the right, with 2 Polish Corps still in the hills to the north of the valley. Movements were delayed on 19-21 May by heavy rains; when Eighth Army was ready to attack on the 23d, the enemy was already retreating under the French threat from Pico. The attack thus made rapid gains, and by the 25th the Canadians crossed the Melfa. The battle to the south of Rome henceforth was everywhere the pursuit of an enemy retreating as rapidly as possible to the Valmontone-Avezzano line to link up with the forces opposite our Anzio beachhead.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

<sup>1</sup>Of the 52,130 a total of 8,340 was killed in action; 31,569 wounded; 12,221 missing. Americans killed were 3848; wounded, 13,987; missing, 4384. British figures were 2725; 12,211; 7156; French, 1704; 5196; 521.

<sup>2</sup>From D-day to D plus 5 a cruiser furnished naval gunfire support to II Corps by firing on Highway 7 east of Terracina, on the seven German 170mm guns near Itri, and on Itri proper.

<sup>3</sup>Originally 10 May, but Eighth Army was unable to get into position in time. The initial intentions of AAI had been to attack about 15 April, but the regrouping of the armies was not fully completed until the middle of April; thereafter time was required for careful planning on all levels.

<sup>4</sup>From 0200, 2 April, Standard Army Time was B Time, two hours ahead of Greenwich Standard Time (Z).

<sup>5</sup>During 18-22 May several plans were made for the drop of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion in the hills above Terracina, but the ground advance made execution of the plans unnecessary.

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## CHAPTER VII

# THE DRIVE TO ROME

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### 1. VI CORPS BREAKS THROUGH AT CISTERNA

23-25 May 1944

THE rapid success of the Fifth Army troops on the southern front had made the junction with the beachhead inevitable several days before the actual meeting on the morning of 25 May. The time had come for the forces at Anzio to begin their part of the operation, and on 23 May VI Corps initiated the second major phase of the Fifth Army drive on Rome. This new offensive, aimed first at breaking the German defenses before Cisterna, rapidly became the main effort of Fifth Army, which concentrated toward the beachhead as speedily as possible. By early June ten divisions of the Army were fighting on or about Colli Laziali.

For almost two weeks after the jump-off on the southern front activity at the beachhead had remained much the same as it had been throughout all of April. By day our troops remained in their dugouts, asleep or resting, while sentries stood guard. At night the regular routine of trench life began anew, and a usual number of patrols went out to explore enemy positions. Our artillery harassed the enemy; in return enemy artillery continued to search out our rear areas, though on a reduced scale. Enemy air activity also decreased, as the Germans diverted their weak air force to the Garigliano River bridges. Despite the outwardly normal tenor of life the troops and commanders at the beachhead were making their final preparations, including an inculcation of the offensive spirit in soldiers who had long been on the defensive.<sup>1</sup> Reserves also came to the beachhead. With the arrival of Combat Command B at the beachhead by small increments during 26 April-7 May the 1st Armored Division was complete. The success of the drive on the southern front released the 36th Division, which moved up in large convoys on four nights, closing east of Nettuno the morning of 22 May. Stocks of ammunition at Anzio, always large to safeguard against a spell of bad weather, were further increased; by the end of the first few days of May a 30-day reserve in all supplies had been placed on the beachhead, besides the regular 10-day operating level.

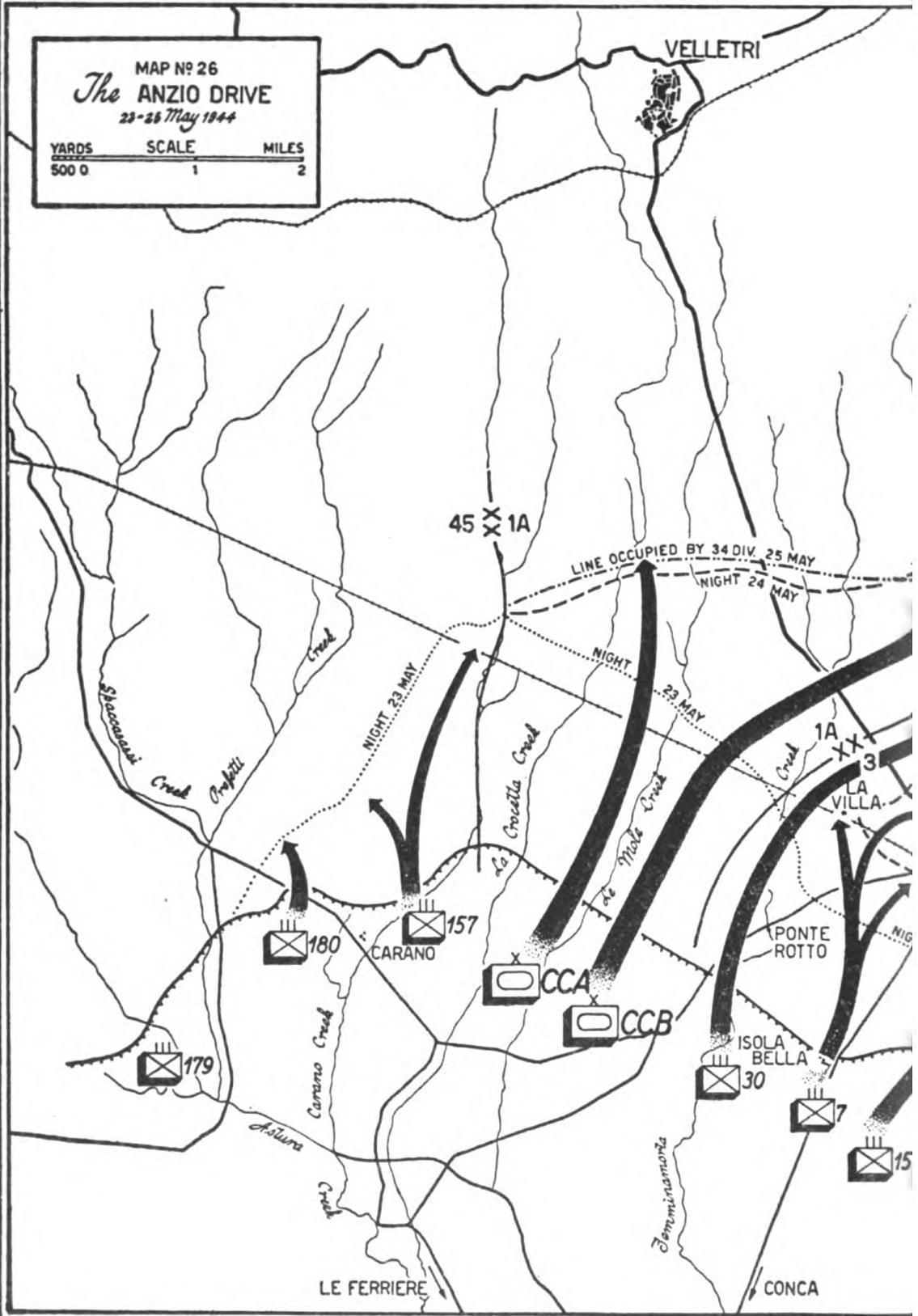
When the Allied forces on the south broke through the Gustav Line and the German Tenth Army began to retreat, the time for the beachhead offensive drew close. One of the chief problems involved in launching that thrust was its direction, for VI Corps could attack either southeast toward Terracina to join up with II Corps, north toward Cisterna and Valmontone to cut Highway 6 behind the enemy, or northwest through the strong defenses of the Factory to break the Lanuvio-Velletri-Valmontone line at its left extremity. (*See Map 17.*) The end decision by General Alexander was to drive on Cisterna and then north through the three-mile-wide valley between Colli Laziali and the Lepini Mountains, a gap extending to the upper end of the Liri-Sacco Valley at Valmontone. The chief danger of this drive was that it might produce a salient dominated by enemy positions at Velletri; on the other hand it would present a positive threat to the enemy in the Liri Valley and should thus encourage his withdrawal. Penetration toward Valmontone would also open up the Velletri-Valmontone line to our assault all along its course; in the fighting to follow, this broadening of the base of attack on Colli Laziali actually proved very valuable.

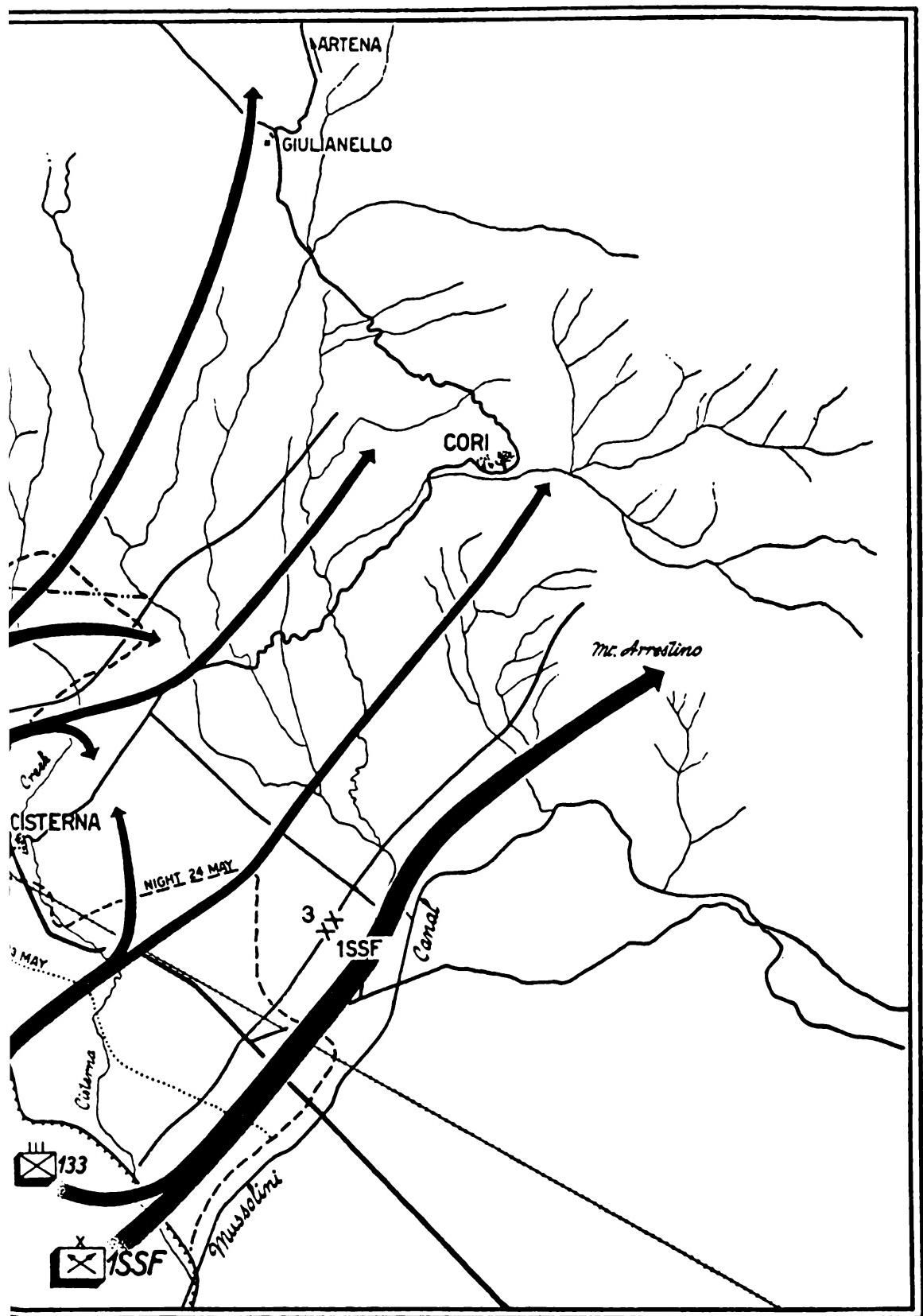
Before the attack the beachhead front ran from the sea on the west along the ridge south of the Moletta River to the Albano road. Then it curved northeast about the Factory to Carano, followed Carano Creek a short distance, and cut southeast parallel to the Campoleone-Cisterna railroad. At the Mussolini Canal our line turned southwest and followed the canal to the sea. This perimeter was garrisoned from left to right by the 5, 1, 45th, and 34th Divisions and the 36th Engineers. In reserve were the 3d and 36th Divisions, the 1st Armored Division, and the 1st Special Service Force.

The corps plan of attack called for the 34th Division, opposite Cisterna, to prepare gaps in the minefields through which three units would attack: the 1st Armored Division to cut Highway 7 north of Cisterna, the 3d Division to take Cisterna, and the 1st Special Service Force to cut Highway 7 south of the town and hold the enemy southeast of the Mussolini Canal. (*See Map 26.*) Thereafter the 36th Division would pass through the 3d Division and take Cori, with the armor on its left driving north along the valley and the 1st Special Service Force on the right moving up barren Mt. Arrestino south of Cori. All units would then be ready to continue the attack toward Artena with the final ob-

MAP N° 26  
The ANZIO DRIVE  
23-26 May 1944

YARDS                    SCALE                    MILES  
500 0                    1                    2





jective of cutting Highway 6 near Valmontone. The British had only a holding role,<sup>2</sup> and the 45th Division action would be limited to expanding the west side of the penetration by pushing up Carano Creek to the railroad. This was to be the final attack at the Anzio beachhead and every effort in planning was taken to insure its success. Enemy opposition was expected to be severe; in particular, an armored counterattack by the 26th Panzer Division might come from the direction of Velletri, and precautions were taken by our units on the left flank of the proposed penetration to meet the enemy tank thrust.

The enemy's defenses on 22 May were held by Fourteenth Army under General Mackensen with five under-strength divisions: the 4th Parachute, 65th Grenadier, 3d Panzer Grenadier, 362d Grenadier, and 715th Grenadier Divisions from west to east. Behind these five divisions lay almost nothing. Confronted by our breakthrough in the south, Marshal Kesselring had had no recourse but to strip his beachhead line of its reserves and in two cases actually to remove units from the front-line divisions. The 26th Panzer Division had moved from the Sezze area by the 18th to oppose the French at Pico; two days later the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division from Lake Bracciano had gone into the line at Terracina. In addition, the 1027th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and two battalions of the 8th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (3d Panzer Grenadier Division) were withdrawn directly from the beachhead garrison to fill the gap in the Lepini Mountains. The nearest strategic reserves were the 92d Grenadier Division, forming at Civitavecchia, and the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division near Leghorn.

Nevertheless the forces remaining in front of VI Corps held a strong position, for the enemy had devoted much attention to the construction of defensive fortifications. In the Cisterna area well prepared strongpoints and outposts, weapons pits, and gun positions extended back in depth to the railroad embankment; another set of defenses lay on the line Lanuvio-Velletri-Valmontone. Yet our troops found, as they advanced through the German positions, that though the enemy had done enough work to make our progress costly he had nowhere finished his labors. Near Cisterna communication trenches often proved to be dummies one to two feet deep, intended merely to make us think that the positions were stronger than they actually were. Similarly the defensive lines to the rear of the front usually

consisted of nothing more than dugouts, command posts, and occasionally trenches, with the result that the enemy troops retreating before our drive had hastily to dig their own foxholes and weapons emplacements on each line. Steel fortifications of the Cassino type did not make their appearance anywhere in the beachhead area, and only a few concrete works were found in the Lanuvio line.

On 19 May General Truscott of VI Corps ordered concentrations for the attack, with D-day set for the 21st. Terracina, however, still remained in enemy hands, and Eighth Army was preparing for its attack on the Hitler Line; so the jump-off was postponed one day, then another, and finally was scheduled for 0630, 23 May, in coordination with the FEC attack toward Ceprano and the Eighth Army assault on the Hitler Line. The last concentrations took place on the night of 21-22 May; the next night the British on the left made small, mock attacks.

At daybreak on 23 May (0538) the front of the 45th and 34th Divisions remained quiet. A light drizzle began, and the enemy relaxed after another vigilant night. Posting their sentries, the Germans huddled in dugouts for a morning nap. At 0545 our artillery began what appeared at first to be another of its irritating, but usual shoots. This time, however, both duration and intensity were far beyond previous experience. At 0625 light bombers bombed in the vicinity of Cisterna, while three groups of fighter-bombers strafed the *wadi* area south of the town. Five minutes later the artillery stopped. Immediately thereafter our tanks loomed up in the smoke all along the front, and behind them came swarms of infantry.

Complete surprise had been achieved. Men of the 180th Infantry had to pry their opponents, often partially clothed, out of the dugouts; below Cisterna the enemy at first thought we were launching another small daytime sortie. Our artillery preparation, the most intensive thus far at the beachhead, had searched out the command posts, assembly areas, and dumps which we had carefully located in the previous weeks, with the result that enemy communications and supply lines were severely damaged. Enemy artillery fire was slow to start and was hampered by a day-long haze limiting German observation from the dominating hill masses. Though the enemy recovered quickly and put up a strong fight, he never could make up for the initial disorganization, and counterattacks remained local in character.

While the 45th Division under General Eagles was winning and retaining against counterattacks its limited objectives on the left flank of the penetration, the main bulk of VI Corps hammered on the Cisterna line, held by the 362d Grenadier Division and the 1028th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. On the morning of 23 May three distinct thrusts passed through the 34th Division in this area: the 1st Armored Division to the north, the 1st Special Service Force to the south, and the 3d Division in the middle. The objective, Cisterna, lay about two miles from our line of departure.

The 1st Armored Division under General Harmon attacked with Combat Command A (1st Armored Regiment and 135th Infantry) on the left and Combat Command B (13th Armored Regiment and 6th Armored Infantry) on the right. "Snakes," each consisting of a metal casing 400 feet long heavily charged with explosive, had been previously constructed at night in *wadis* of the area and camouflaged until used. Though the light rain on the morning of the 23d caused some trouble in getting the assembled snakes out of the ditches onto level ground, six of the snakes were pushed into the minefields in the Combat Command A zone near three enemy strongpoints. Here they blew gaps which threw the enemy into panic and permitted the rapid advance of our tanks.

Columns of medium tanks led the way, followed by waves of infantry from the 135th Infantry and by light tanks. When the enemy recovered, single soldiers tried to run up and throw hand grenades into the open turrets, but the machine guns of the tanks stopped them and Combat Command A under Col. Maurice W. Daniel made rapid progress. By the middle of the afternoon it had gained the railroad; by dark the line of the infantry was 500 yards beyond the railroad, where the tanks and infantry halted for the night. The 135th Infantry alone had taken over 300 prisoners. Combat Command B under General Allen on the right was held up by minefields until the late morning, when engineers had cleared gaps; then it too advanced to the railroad at some points, with its right on Femminamorta Creek. The infantry outposted the tanks during the night, and hasty repairs were made on damaged armor. Our losses had been 11 M4s knocked out, 44 M4s damaged, and 8 M10s damaged. The antitank opposition had consisted mostly of mines, though some enemy tanks were encountered.

The 1st Special Service Force under Brig. Gen. Robert T. Frederick, on the far right of the penetration, attacked on the morning of the 23d with its 1st Regiment (1st Battalion, 2d Regiment, attached) in the lead and the 1st Battalion, 133d Infantry, following in close support. The spearhead of this attack reached the railroad beyond Highway 7 at noon. Here a counter-attack by enemy infantry and 12 Mark VIs of the 508th Panzer Battalion from the southeast cut off one company, but our troops held at the highway.

Opposition in front of the 3d Division under Maj. Gen. John W. O'Daniel, attacking between the 1st Armored Division and the 1st Special Service Force, was the most stubborn met by any of our troops on the 23d. All three regiments attacked with two battalions abreast, the 7th Infantry under Col. Wiley H. O'Mohundro in the center, the 15th Infantry under Col. Richard G. Thomas, Jr., on the south, and the 30th Infantry under Col. Lionel C. McGarr on the north, with the Ponte Rotto and Isola Bella roads as the axes of advance. Backed by the 751st Tank Battalion and the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion, the infantry drove forward about half the distance to Cisterna; the 15th Infantry on the right reached Highway 7 south of Cisterna during the night. Cisterna itself was shelled by our 8-inch and 240mm howitzers for two hours during the day.

The first day of the Anzio attack had been extremely successful. Units everywhere had gained their first objectives, though on the extreme right flank our troops had not been able to hold all their gains. Extraordinarily large numbers of the 362d Grenadier Division were willing to surrender when encircled or seriously threatened. Our total of prisoners for the day ran to almost 1,500, half of them taken in the aggressive drive by the 3d Division. This unit had the heaviest casualties on our side with a total of 950 killed, wounded, and missing.<sup>3</sup> Losses of our armor and tank destroyers ran about 100, most of them easily repairable; 22 enemy tanks and self-propelled guns were claimed destroyed. German artillery fire had been relatively light, and enemy aircraft had presented no problem at all. During the day our air force put 110 fighters, 300 fighter-bombers, 60 light bombers, and 216 heavy bombers over the beachhead and vicinity. Despite poor weather enemy artillery positions and bivouac areas were well covered.

The attack began again at 0530, 24 May, after a 30-minute

artillery preparation. The 1st Armored Division Artillery had been pushed well forward during the night and gave good support to the armor, which jumped off at H-hour. Though the enemy had rushed a large part of his scanty supply of antitank guns to the area, both combat commands broke through the German positions and crossed Highway 7 north of Cisterna before noon. Combat Command B then drove across the valley toward Cori against steadily weakening opposition. Confirming the prediction made by prisoners before the attack, the Germans surrendered in large numbers to our tanks when the mine and antitank gun barriers had been smashed. By dark the leading elements of Combat Command B had reached the Cisterna-Cori road, but the main body halted for the night short of this objective.

Combat Command A turned northwest upon reaching the highway so as to expand the left side of the penetration. As it moved up toward Velletri, German resistance steadily stiffened. The enemy infantry operated as snipers to delay the tanks and infantry; and vineyards and high cornstalks impeded the tankers' observation. The medium tanks started out in the lead but found the going difficult. The light tanks then passed through with the infantry and struggled forward against small enemy counter-attacks all along the line. The 1st Battalion, 135th Infantry, acting as pivot on the left flank with Company C, 1st Armored Regiment, made only a small gain; on the right flank the 3d Battalion, 135th Infantry, and Company A, 1st Armored Regiment, pushed up about a mile under heavy artillery and mortar fire. Combat Command A was developing a strong enemy position at Velletri but had already pushed far enough up Highway 7 to check any enemy counterattack from this direction. The Germans actually could not muster strength enough for such a thrust, and counterattacks on the 24th were generally weaker than on the 23d.

While Combat Command B swept on as the north arm of the wide pincers about Cisterna, the 133d Infantry under Col. William H. Schildroth had relieved the 1st Special Service Force at 0300, 24 May, and attacked in the afternoon as the south arm. By dark the advance elements had secured the railroad beyond Highway 7. The enemy was bent on holding open his route of withdrawal from the Littoria sector, but the two enemy infantry companies which counterattacked up the railroad from the south-

east were stopped by our artillery and by chemical mortars of the 84th Chemical Battalion.

In the immediate vicinity of Cisterna the enemy garrison held out more stubbornly on the 24th, but it could not prevent the 30th Infantry on the north and the 15th Infantry on the south from closing in about it. On the left the 2d Battalion, 30th Infantry, gained Highway 7; then the 3d Battalion passed through and advanced after dark on the south flank of Combat Command B almost to the Cisterna-Cori road. The 15th Infantry tightened its hold south and southeast of Cisterna, and the 7th Infantry drove in for the kill on the following day.

During the night of 24-25 May the 1st Special Service Force moved up on the south behind the 133d Infantry, ready to pass through it at dawn and strike for Mt. Arrestino. On the north of Cisterna a gap between Combat Command A and Combat Command B was developing as each unit continued on its own axis of advance. This gap was filled by the 34th Division (less the 133d Infantry), which took command at 0630, 25 May, of a five-mile front north of Cisterna behind the 1st Armored Division; the 135th Infantry under Lt. Col. Harry W. Sweeting, Jr., remained on the left of Highway 7, and the 168th Infantry under Colonel Boatner came up on the right. The presence of this solid block under General Ryder protected the forces about Cisterna from the threat of an armored counterattack in the north and permitted the armor to move more freely in exploiting the German collapse below Cori.

By the morning of 25 May the enemy situation in the Cisterna area was chaotic. In the rubble of Cisterna some remnants of the 362d Grenadier Division held tenaciously; below Velletri paratroopers put up a good fight; but everywhere else on the German left flank the scene was one of hurried retreat, partly toward Velletri, partly toward Valmontone, with some elements of the 715th Grenadier Division assembling at Norma. At the same time the German command was throwing in the 1060th Grenadier Regiment (92d Grenadier Division) and the Hermann Goering Reconnaissance Battalion to stop our thrust toward Valmontone, and vehicles of these units were moving past Giulianello toward Cori against the heavy current in the other direction. So dangerous was the situation that the enemy motor movements continued in daylight of the 25th.

Our air force reported heavy traffic on the Cori-Giulianello

and Giulianello-Valmontone roads early in the morning. By afternoon this movement was estimated at over 600 vehicles, and our fighters and fighter-bombers went to work on the tempting opportunity. All through the afternoon the forward ground controller of XII Tactical Air Command at the beachhead diverted flights from their missions against enemy artillery and sent them over the enemy motor columns. By dusk the air force had scored one of its most resounding triumphs in direct support of ground operations thus far in the Italian campaign. First our pilots jammed traffic by bombing; then they strafed the resulting concentrations of up to 200 vehicles. The total reported by VI Corps for the activities of the air force on 25 May was 645 vehicles destroyed and 446 damaged. The essential accuracy of these figures was proved in the next week as our troops moved up to Valmontone, for the roads were littered with the burned, twisted wrecks of tanks, self-propelled guns, trucks, command cars, personnel carriers—a vast graveyard of all types of German transport.

Smitten by our air force from above and smashed by our artillery, armor, and infantry on front and flanks, the enemy broke in the Cisterna area on 25 May. In the zone of Combat Command B the 13th Armored Regiment (less Company D) under Col. Hamilton H. Howze was given the mission of exploiting the collapse by driving north up the valley. The tanks moved forward rapidly past the vineyards and scattered patches of trees with the self-propelled artillery in close support, leaving a battalion of infantry to follow up as closely as it could. By early afternoon the 3d Battalion had reached the Cori-Giulianello road below Giulianello. The armor then halted and waited for the infantry. Company A, 81st Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, rushed on north to cut the Giulianello-Velletri road just west of Giulianello; the 1st Battalion, 13th Armored Regiment, with infantry behind, pressed after it up the wooded draws. Over on the right flank the 3d Regiment, 1st Special Service Force, jumped off at 0530 for Mt. Arrestino and secured its goal before dusk.

In the center the 30th Infantry and 15th Infantry completed their encirclement of Cisterna; then each regiment left a battalion behind to guard the eastern exits of the town and moved on toward Cori. Elements of the 3d Reconnaissance Troop entered Cori in the afternoon, and the infantry pulled up onto the

slopes east and south of the town by dark. Here they met the 1060th Grenadier Regiment and the Hermann Goering Reconnaissance Battalion. These units had been heavily hit by our air force before they reached the scene of action and were committed hastily in the evening below Cori without reconnaissance or liaison. Neither delayed us for long, and the survivors reeled back in complete defeat with the rest of the fleeing enemy.

At Cisterna and Velletri alone did the enemy resist strongly. The Combat Command A attack on Velletri on the 25th was halted by enemy antitank fire and by Mark V tanks, and several German counterattacks forced the command to go on the defensive. At Cisterna the 3d Battalion, 7th Infantry, pressed into the town on the morning of the 25th, supported by the 2d Battalion on the west and the 1st Battalion on the north. The fight quickly became a house-to-house battle in which the Germans used each battered building and each room as a pillbox. Even after our men had cleared an area, the Germans infiltrated on our rear from the catacombs of the town, and the enemy garrison inflicted heavy casualties on the 3d Battalion in vain efforts to break out of our ring. All through the afternoon the mopping up went on; by 1900 the survivors, including the commanding officer of the 956th Grenadier Regiment, capitulated. Tankdozers of the 16th Armored Engineer Battalion moved in immediately and had opened Highway 7 for two-way traffic by dark.

Cisterna, Cori, and Mt. Arrestino were all in our hands by the evening of 25 May. Here as on the southern front our victory had been quicker, less expensive, and more devastating to the enemy than had been hoped. Though the 3d Division and the 1st Armored Division had suffered considerable casualties in men and armor, they yet remained effective fighting forces after taking the objectives of both phases of the original attack order. It had not even been necessary to commit our reserves as planned. Enemy resistance in the Cisterna-Valmontone corridor had collapsed; both the 362d Grenadier Division and the 715th Grenadier Division were split and disorganized. By noon of the 25th 2,640 prisoners had passed through the Army cages at Anzio. Thus far our attack was a superb success.

## 2. EXPANSION OF THE BEACHHEAD ATTACK

26-30 May 1944

Encouraged by the success at Cisterna and the junction with the southern forces, General Clark decided late on the 25th to broaden the scope of the beachhead attack at once. VI Corps was ordered to attack not later than noon of the following day to seize initially the line Lanuvio-Campoleone Station: in other words, to attack northwest below Colli Laziali and break the southwestern anchor of the last German defense line before Rome. (See Map 27.) At the same time it was to continue the drive east of Colli Laziali to cut Highway 6 at Valmontone.

This order, which shifted the axis of main attack, was carried out with great speed. Early on 25 May members of the Fifth Army staff discussed such a shift with General Truscott, corps commander, and had decided that the new attack would be feasible on the morning of the 27th. A preparatory order on this basis was issued at 1815, 25 May, by VI Corps. As the day progressed, however, the demoralization of the enemy in the Cisterna-Cori district became ever more apparent, and the 45th Division reported withdrawals on its front. The Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division, the last dependable reserve of the German Army Group Southwest, was coming up, but preliminary indications suggested that it would be utilized in the Valmontone area. The enemy forces southwest of Velletri could expect no substantial reinforcements.

In the evening General Clark decided to attack toward Lanuvio on the 26th. At 2300 the division commanders met at VI Corps Headquarters to receive the corps order. Twelve hours later the attack was under way. During that brief period the major elements of two divisions were shifted by foot and motor on crossing paths over a distance varying from 4 to 15 miles; corps artillery displaced to support the new drive; orders and reconnaissance were initiated and completed by all echelons from corps to battalions.

Some of the necessary movements were already in progress under the plan to attack on the 27th; others were speeded by the new order. In the main offensive the 34th and 45th Divisions would push west below Velletri, the 45th Division on the left toward Campoleone Station and the 34th Division toward Lanuvio. Units of the 45th Division, which had held their gains east of the Factory, were essentially in position except for the 179th Infantry, which was relieved by the 1 Division in the Factory area

and moved to division reserve during the night. The 34th Division, which was to attack with two regiments abreast through the lines of the 135th Infantry west of Highway 7, was widely scattered at dusk on the 25th, but both the 133d and 168th Infantry reached assembly areas in time for the attack.

On the right flank of the 34th Division the 1st Armored Division united its efforts in a drive on Velletri. Combat Command A was already in position on Highway 7; during the night Combat Command B moved to its right flank to threaten the town from the east. Inasmuch as two battalions of the 13th Armored Regiment rejoined Combat Command B, armored protection for the 3d Division on the open, grain-covered swells north of Giulianello was achieved by forming Task Force Howze and attaching it to that unit. This task force, consisting of the 3d Battalion, 13th Armored Regiment; the 1st Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry; the 91st Armored Field Artillery Battalion; and supporting units, remained a distinct entity throughout the rest of the drive on Rome, though its composition varied from time to time. The proposed advance of the 34th Division to the northwest and the shift in the 1st Armored Division axis of attack again created a large gap in our lines north of Cisterna, which was plugged early on the 26th by the 36th Division under General Walker.

After essential completion of these moves the broadened attack of VI Corps began at 1100, 26 May, with three distinct thrusts. The 34th and 45th Divisions swung west below Colli Laziali; the 1st Armored Division drove at Velletri; and the 3d Division continued its exploitation of the breakthrough at Cisterna. In this operation it was assisted by the 1st Special Service Force on the right and by Task Force Howze on the left. By the evening of the 26th the 7th Infantry reached the high ground south and west of Artena against scattered opposition; our own aircraft caused some casualties by strafing the marching columns. The next day the 15th Infantry entered Artena and mopped it up by 1520.

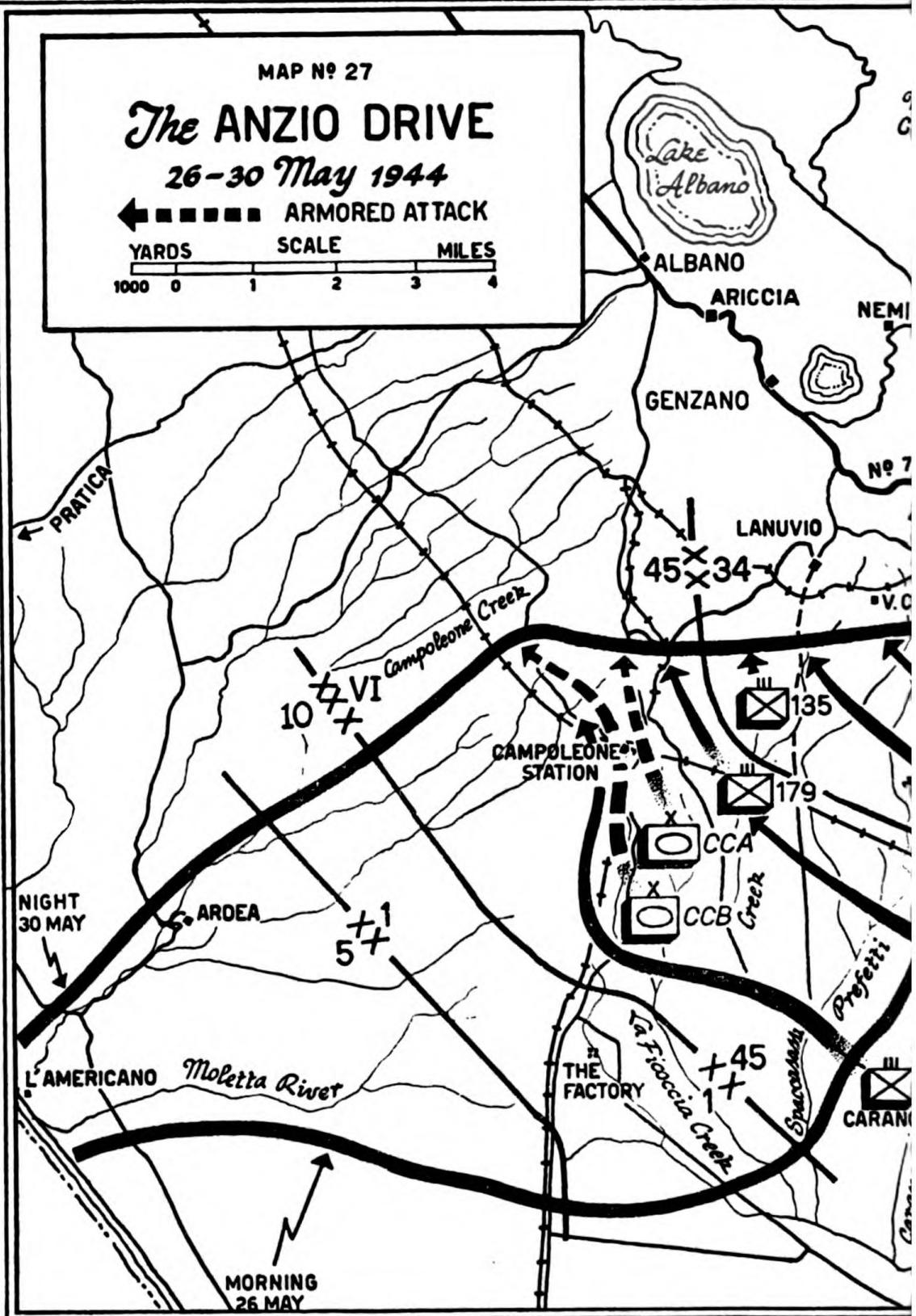
The 3d Division then assumed an all-around defensive position to protect its gains. The 1st Special Service Force, which came up along the hills, moved down into the town and held the right flank. To its left the 15th Infantry dug in north of the Artena-Cori road, with the 7th Infantry to its rear on the western slopes of the hills and Task Force Howze to its front along the railroad.

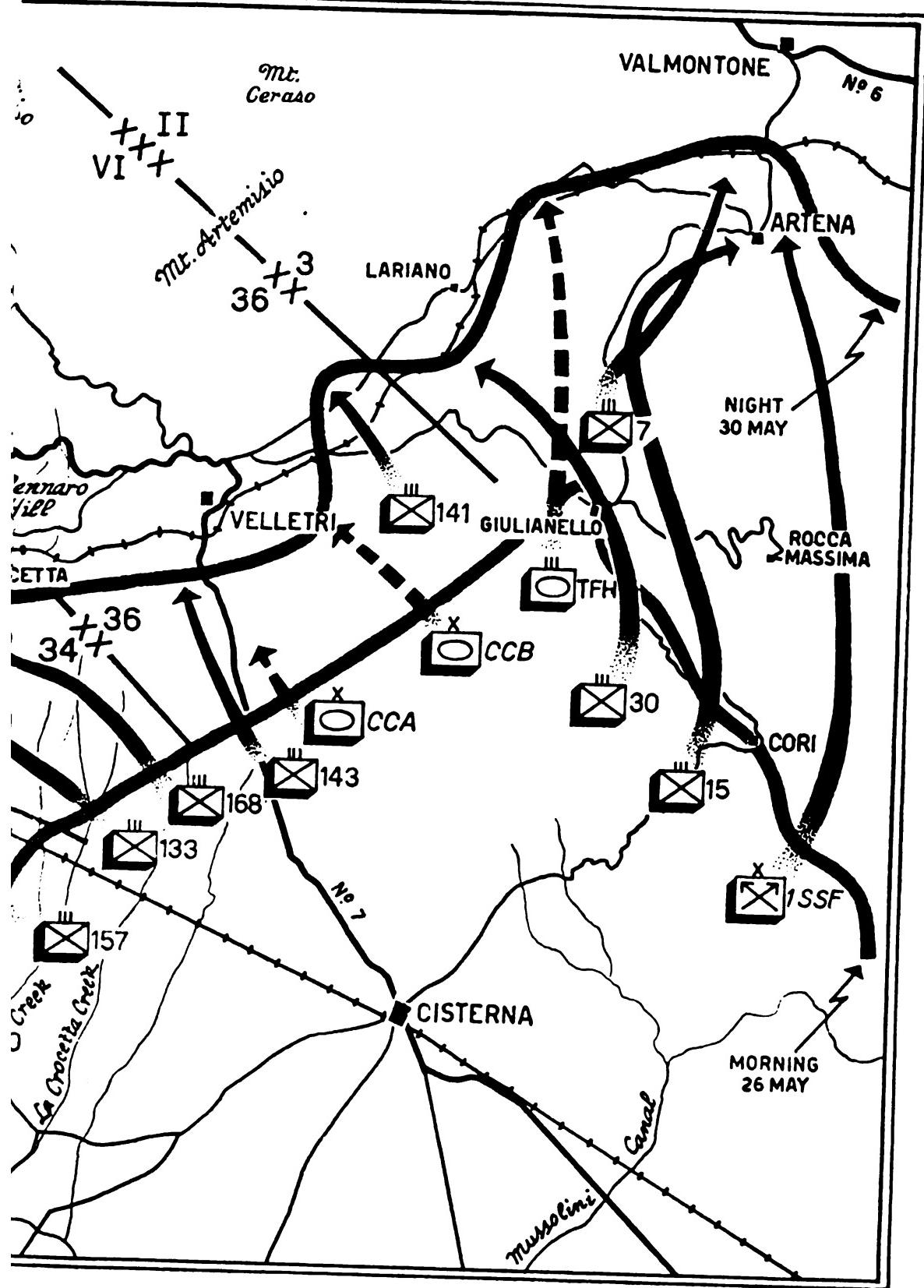
MAP N° 27

# The ANZIO DRIVE

26-30 May 1944

← ■■■■■ ARMORED ATTACK  
YARDS SCALE MILES  
1000 0 1 2 3 4





The tanks of this force had advanced close to Highway 6 on both the 26th and the 27th, but on the latter day had been driven back by enemy self-propelled guns. The 30th Infantry remained at Giulianello to guard the flank and keep open the division route of supply. The 9th and 10th Field Artillery Battalions and the 91st Armored Field Artillery Battalion displaced north of Giulianello to support the infantry. Together with our 240mm howitzers and 8-inch guns, the artillery occasionally directed fire at promising targets on Highway 6 in the vicinity of Valmontone.

Having secured a vantage point from which he had essentially cut Highway 6 as a German escape route, General O'Daniel prepared to push on and take actual possession of the highway. This plan, however, could not be executed with the forces at his disposal, for the bulk of the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division had by this time run the gantlet of our strafing and bombing and had been thrown into the Valmontone sector to check our advance. Since the main enemy forces in the Liri Valley, retreating as rapidly as possible through Subiaco and Palastrina, needed another few days to clear completely out of the threatened trap, the German command committed its last strong reserve in the Valmontone area. About this block it assembled the scraps of the 715th Grenadier Division and other units retreating before the French.

Though Marshal Kesselring by this action abandoned the Lanuvio sector to its own meager garrison, he was able to stop the 3d Division in the period 27-30 May. In the evening of the 27th the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division launched two sharp counterattacks with infantry and tanks to discourage any farther advance on our part, and enemy pressure was steady for the next few days, especially along the Valmontone-Artena road. The 3d Division was content to hold its gains until II Corps could come up from the south with reinforcements; to aid in controlling the wide-open right flank of the division in the Lepini Mountains the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron patrolled the area from the 29th, pending the arrival of the FEC. In the south IV Corps relieved II Corps on the 28th, and at 1400, 29 May, the latter headquarters assumed command of the part of the VI Corps zone east of the line Frascati-Lake Giulianello, including the 3d Division with its attached forces. Late on the same day the 337th Infantry closed in the Rocca Massima-Gulianello area. The following day the 338th Infantry and the 760th Tank

Battalion came up from the south, and the 85th Division Artillery closed in the new II Corps zone. The shift of II Corps headquarters and of part of its troops from the south presaged the imminent resumption of the offensive east of Colli Laziali.

Well to the left of the 3d Division the 1st Armored Division had on 26 May driven toward Velletri across close, broken country ill suited for armor. Enemy resistance here had been stubborn and had stopped our attack south and east of the town on a heavy, hasty minefield backed by antitank guns and by the fanatical defense of the German paratroopers. During the night of 26-27 May the 1st Armored Division went into reserve for maintenance. The 36th Division, which moved on up Highway 7 to relieve the armor, took over the mission of guarding the area between the 3d and 34th Divisions and of keeping pressure on Velletri without becoming too heavily engaged. The 36th Reconnaissance Troop initially patrolled the three-mile gap between the 143d Infantry under Col. Paul D. Adams south of the town and the 30th Infantry near Giulianello; then on the afternoon of the 27th the 141st Infantry under Col. John W. Harmony was committed northeast of Velletri to close the gap. For the next few days this regiment advanced slowly behind strong combat patrols. By the 29th the 1st Battalion pushed to the Velletri-Artena road; the next day the 3d Battalion expanded the salient toward Velletri. Opposition in this area was light, for the main line of the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division reached from Valsmontone only as far as Lariano. The paratroopers at Velletri were content to maintain their control of the area immediately surrounding that town, and were primarily interested in the struggle about Lanuvio, where the most severe fighting was taking place.

On the first two days of the new attack, 26-27 May, the main drive by the 34th and 45th Divisions toward Lanuvio and Campoleone Station met only spotty resistance from enemy infantry rear guards in scattered strongpoints, coupled with long-range machine-gun fire and some opposition from tanks and self-propelled guns. The character of the enemy resistance indicated that he was falling back to the Lanuvio line, based on the Albano-Lanuvio-Velletri railroad, and our progress was rapid. In the 34th Division zone the 133d and 168th Infantry moved abreast, the latter on the right, and by evening of the 27th reached a strong enemy outpost line running south from San Gennaro

Hill across the entire front of the 34th Division. Our troops in this area were now beginning to mount the ridges on the south slopes of Colli Laziali which were once lava streams running down into the plain. Just south of the Albano-Velletri railroad these ridges are slightly over 200 meters in elevation. Their sides are sometimes steep and scrub-covered while the crests are given over to wheatfields. Most of the houses in this area lie by the railroad and Highway 7, where settlement is almost continuous.

The 45th Division moved over the rolling wheatfields east of the Factory, the 157th Infantry under Colonel Church on the right and the 180th Infantry under Colonel Dulaney on the left. The latter unit ran into considerable opposition on the 26th from enemy entrenched in the prepared defenses of the Factory area, but with the aid of the 191st Tank Battalion it drove forward and wiped out the 2d Battalion, 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. On the 27th both regiments moved more easily. Coordination of the attack between regiments and between the divisions had been incomplete all along the front, especially on the 26th; for the next two days there was a gap of almost a mile between the 45th and 34th Divisions north of the Cisterna-Campoleone railroad. The respective division reconnaissance troops were placed in this area but were not able to control it completely.

Nevertheless we were now less than two miles from our objectives at Lanuvio and Campoleone Station. The enemy could not afford to yield more ground on his left flank at Lanuvio, and his ability to hold his main line of resistance appeared dubious; for the forces available to the German command consisted only of the 65th Grenadier Division with elements of the 3d Panzer Grenadier and 4th Parachute Divisions and scattered remnants of the 362d Grenadier Division. The 1st Armored Division accordingly was alerted to be ready to attack through the 45th Division on the 28th.

During the next three days the expected breakthrough was not achieved. Though the Germans had no solid, organized block of troops on which to base their resistance, they combined the broken units available into battle groups, patched the gaps with "Alarm Companies" hastily formed from rear-echelon personnel, and stiffened weak spots with a dash of paratroopers from their less threatened right flank in front of the British. The ingenuity and craft of the Germans in defense were rarely better demonstrated than in the battle of Lanuvio. Since our right flank (the

168th Infantry) was already pressed up against the main German defensive line, our progress on 28-30 May consisted of a great wheeling movement to the northwest with the 34th Division as pivot. As each unit to the left in turn came up against the German defenses, it was stopped, with the result that the forward motion of our drive kept shifting farther and farther to the left. Here the 45th Division, aided from the 29th by the 1st Armored Division, pushed first west, then slowly northwest toward Albano; on the right the battalions of the 34th Division surged up vainly day after day against the enemy strongpoints east of Lanuvio.

In the 34th Division zone the enemy main line of resistance ran immediately south of the railroad and was based on the defensive works which had been prepared in the previous months. For the most part these works were limited to deep connecting trenches, dugouts in the sides of banks, and command post installations; all else was added by the troops as they fought. Under such conditions barbed wire and mines were rare, but the German skill in siting automatic weapons remained as great as ever. Self-propelled guns and tanks roamed the good road network leading south from Highway 7, firing sometimes from south of the railroad, sometimes from the slopes above the tracks. The commanding nose on which the town of Lanuvio is situated was a favorite spot for these weapons and also for machine guns delivering long-range fire.

On the division right the 168th Infantry faced two particularly nasty strongpoints: San Gennaro Hill and Villa Crocetta on the crest of Hill 209. During the night of 27-28 May the Germans abandoned the lower reaches of their outpost line, on which they had delayed us the previous day, and retreated to their final positions. Attacks on three straight days, 28-30 May, by the 168th Infantry failed to gain any of these positions despite aid from tanks and tank destroyers. To the left the 133d Infantry was able to push forward a little more on the 28th before it ran up against the main German defenses, but thereafter neither it nor the 135th Infantry, committed on the left on the 30th, was able to make any headway north toward Lanuvio. During the night of 29-30 May the bitter defense by the remnants of the 362d Grenadier Division in the Villa Crocetta-San Gennaro area and by the paratroopers from the 12th Parachute Regiment at Lanuvio received some air support when nine scattered enemy aircraft strafed the roads in rear of the 34th and 45th Divisions.

While the 34th Division was battering at the railroad line, the troops on its left followed up the enemy withdrawal to his main line of resistance. Advance on the 28th put the 45th Division on the railroad west of the Albano road; at dark the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry, was hit by an enemy counterattack coming down Spaccasassi Creek from the north and was forced to fall back to the creek line for the night. The gap on the right of the division had already proved irritating before this last indication of its danger, and the 179th Infantry under Lt. Col. Preston J. Murphy was committed on the late afternoon of the 28th to plug the hole. The 180th Infantry on the left had reached the Albano road and then the railroad by the middle of the morning and consolidated there for the night after an unsuccessful thrust to the west in the late afternoon. Opposition in this zone so far had fortunately been limited, for Company C, 191st Tank Battalion, was in no condition to support the attack. Six of its tanks were without crews at nightfall on 27 May, and the replacements borrowed from the 1st Armored Division and tank destroyer units consisted largely of rear echelon personnel ill acquainted with the operation of an M4 tank; tanker replacements were so scarce that nothing else was available.

Despite his disorganization the enemy still was not breaking; greater pressure was clearly necessary. During the night of 28-29 May General Truscott accordingly committed the last major reserve of VI Corps by ordering the 1st Armored Division to move through the 45th Division and attack up the Albano road on the morning of the 29th. To give the armor a wider road net the boundary between VI Corps and the 1 Division was shifted to the left. The 34th Division was to continue its attack toward Lake Albano, protected on the right by the 36th Division; the 45th Division was to regroup and follow the armor. Both the 34th and 45th Divisions turned more toward the north as a result of these orders, and both units committed their division reserves to reinforce the attack. The 179th Infantry had already entered the line east of the Albano road on the evening of the 28th; to its right the 135th Infantry attacked toward Lanuvio on the morning of the 30th. Naval support was also forthcoming, and a French cruiser shelled targets in the Albano area on the 29th with good results.

The attacks of the 34th Division on 29-30 May have already been noted. In the zone of the 45th Division the 1st Armored

Division moved up during the night and left its line of departure at 0530, 29 May, Combat Command B on the left supported by the 180th Infantry and Combat Command A on the right. In the morning the advance met light resistance. Tanks of Combat Command B had cleared the enemy rear guard out of Campoleone Station by noon and pressed north across the scrub-covered *wadis* of the area; Combat Command A crossed the Albano road and likewise wheeled north. By afternoon the tanks had pulled well ahead of the infantry.

As our armor began to reach the lines on which the enemy intended to hold, opposition mounted sharply both for the infantry and the tanks. Since the enemy strongpoints which our tanks had by-passed now pinned the infantry to the ground, mutual tank-infantry support could not be gained during the afternoon. The 180th Infantry, which had moved in column of battalions to Campoleone Station in the morning, was halted there by tanks, self-propelled guns, 20mm flak weapons, and infantry fire. The 2d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, in the Combat Command A zone was first stopped, then driven back by an enemy tank-infantry counterattack on its right flank. The armor of Combat Command A, well to the front, met enemy artillery fire of heavy caliber and encountered antitank guns, self-propelled 88mm guns, and tanks in small groups on the front and right flank. Our tanks, also harassed by close-range infantry opposition, suffered severely during the afternoon.

By evening 21 M4s and 16 M5s had been knocked out. In contrast with the initial attacks above Cisterna, where damage was due largely to mines and was easily repairable, most of the casualties on 29 May were caused by antitank guns and resulted in complete losses. For the night the 3d Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment, pulled back two miles to the line of the infantry, a mile north of Campoleone Station. On its right, east of the Albano road, was the 179th Infantry in column of battalions; on the left Combat Command B held positions northwest of the Station. Though the attack had been only partially successful, Campoleone Station was now firmly in our hands.

Renewal of the attacks on the 30th proved ever more clearly that we were up against the main enemy defense line south of the Velletri-Lanuvio-Albano railroad. East of the Albano road the 179th Infantry and the 191st Tank Battalion were stopped cold; west of the road Combat Command A, though reinforced

by the 2d Battalion, 135th Infantry, and the 2d Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment, made practically no gains and even had to beat off enemy tank-infantry counterattacks. The armor of Combat Command B once more thrust its spearhead northwest along the Campoleone railroad and by keeping in closer touch with the infantry reached Campoleone Creek; during the night the 157th Infantry came up to reinforce Combat Command B. Only on the far left was extensive movement still possible. Here the British 1 Division had taken the Factory without opposition on the 28th and pushed well across the Albano road on the 29th. The 5 Division crossed the Moletta and took Ardea on the 30th. The defense line Lanuvio-Campoleone Station-Ardea had already been so cracked at its upper end that the Germans by the sea continued to pull back toward Pratica di Mare.

At dusk on 30 May the Fifth Army drive on Rome appeared to have stalled. The 1st Armored Division and the 45th Division had fought bitterly but unsuccessfully along the Albano road throughout the day. The 34th Division had been stopped below Lanuvio on the 29th; to its right the 36th Division, encircling Velletri on the south and east, found the town an enemy stronghold. On the extreme right flank of the beachhead, now held by II Corps under General Keyes, the 85th Division was just coming up to reinforce the 3d Division below Valmontone. In this zone our troops had remained on the defensive since 27 May.

Nonetheless the over-all situation of Fifth Army was favorable. Our troops in the Lepini Mountains had been moving northward against slight rearguard action for the past five days and could now reinforce the beachhead drive. The issue on the southern front had been decided: the enemy had been routed, had patched together his broken line, and was retreating as rapidly as possible. The sole important point remaining was the speed with which the American and French columns could sweep through the Lepini Mountains and join up with the beachhead forces at Valmontone. (*See Map 20.*) For his part, the enemy was interested in slowing down our advance only so far as to permit his troops to clear the Liri-Sacco Valley. Action accordingly consisted of the pursuit of a rear guard retreating rapidly on the west and more slowly on the east; in the Pontine Marshes the 91st and 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadrons ranged at liberty with no opposition. Thanks to the successful resistance of the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division at Valmon-

tone the units in the Lepini Mountains finally got out without suffering a major encirclement, but their incidental losses were still very heavy.

The 85th Division, relieved by elements of the 88th Division on 27-28 May after reaching Sezze, was already at the beachhead by the night of the 30th. II Corps turned over its zone and the 88th Division to IV Corps under General Crittenberger at 0001, 28 May, and by afternoon of the 29th had taken over its zone at Artena. Under IV Corps control the 88th Division spent the next three days in mopping up the hills as far as Sermoneta while waiting for the FEC to advance sufficiently to relieve it. The 349th Infantry departed for the beachhead on 29 May; the rest of the division was on its way by the 31st after relief by the 4th Mountain Division; and IV Corps officially went out of the line at 1400, 1 June.

During the week of 25-31 May the FEC advanced on two main axes, the 4th Mountain Division under General Sevez pushing up the Amaseno-Carpineto road to clear the Lepini Mountains and the 2d Moroccan Division under General Dody guiding on the south bank of the Sacco River. The ultimate aim of these drives was a junction with the beachhead forces in the vicinity of Valmontone. The right flank of VI Corps had been exposed by the bold thrust of the 3d Division and the 1st Special Service Force to Artena to threaten the enemy's Liri Valley communications; it was essential that the FEC close as quickly as possible the gap between its front and the exposed flank at the beachhead. Despite occasional resistance of enemy rear guards and the delay due to relieving IV Corps, General Juin's forces had drawn well up by the 31st and might be expected to come onto the right flank at Valmontone in two or three days. Elsewhere, in the Liri Valley, the enemy forces retreating before Eighth Army were moving generally in the direction of Avezzano, away from the scene of battle at Colli Laziali. The Germans before Fifth Army were ever more weary, ever fewer; and we could count with some certainty on the fact that they could not be reinforced. When the FEC and the 88th Division arrived, we would have sufficient superiority to crush the enemy completely.

### 3. AT THE GATES OF ROME

31 May-3 June 1944

Actually movements were in progress at dark on 30 May which made our capture of Rome a matter of the immediate future. These movements were being executed by the 36th Division: the unit which had helped to secure the initial beachhead of Fifth Army at Salerno long months ago was now to cap its record by making the final breakthrough at Colli Laziali.

Since the night of 25-26 May the division had held lines south and then east of the enemy strongpoint of Velletri. The 141st Infantry on the east had gradually advanced until by the 30th it had a firm hold on the Artena-Velletri road below the great wooded bulk of Mt. Artemisio (939 meters). Extensive patrolling gradually disclosed the fact that the enemy forces, drawn by the fight at Lanuvio and by the threat to Valmontone, had left Mt. Artemisio unguarded. Our exploitation of this superb opportunity was swift. Fifth Army cancelled tentative plans for the division to attack through the 34th Division, and shortly after noon on 30 May the division commander, General Walker, issued his attack orders. In brief, the 142d and 143d Infantry, with the former in the lead, were to move through the 141st Infantry on the night of 30-31 May and seize Mt. Artemisio while the latter regiment blocked off the enemy at Velletri. The night attack up steep, wooded slopes would be a difficult operation, but the 36th Division had been trained for just such missions.

In the late afternoon and early night the 36th Engineers, which had reverted to Army reserve after joining up with the southern forces on the 25th, relieved the 143d Infantry south of Velletri and two battalions of the 141st Infantry east of the town. At 2100 the 143d Infantry began its movement to the right flank of the division. The 142d Infantry received its orders at 1600 from Colonel Lynch, entrucked immediately, and at 1830 proceeded via Cisterna, Cori, and Giulianello to the zone of the 141st Infantry. Although the regiment had road priority, congested traffic delayed completion of the 16-mile motor march until 2215. Battalion and company commanders reached the new area ahead of the troops, made their reconnaissance, and pointed out to the platoon leaders their objectives on the great black mass of Mt. Artemisio as dusk turned to dark.

At 2255 the 142d Infantry moved out in column of battalions, the 2d Battalion in the lead, followed by Regimental Head-

quarters, 1st Battalion, and 3d Battalion. Aided by the new moon, which cast just enough light to pick out the path, the advance guard reached the Velletri-Artena road at 0130, 31 May, and marched through the vineyards on the lower slopes of Mt. Artemisio. Amid the howling of occasional dogs and a burst of enemy air activity toward Velletri the regiment moved forward steadily. As the first gray light of dawn began to dim out the stars about 0415, the head of the column was starting up the steeper slopes of the hill across an open field. Men hurried a little faster, and by 0635 the 2d Battalion had seized Maschio d' Ariano and Hill 931 at the north end of Mt. Artemisio. On Maschio d' Ariano they captured three German artillery observers, one of whom was taking a bath; thus far not a shot had been fired.

After the reorganization necessitated by the rapid advance over unfamiliar terrain, the 1st and 2d Battalions, the latter on the right, moved southwest down the ridge at 0840 and searched through the dense woods for the enemy. Throughout the morning they advanced with almost no opposition. After noon enemy resistance gradually increased as the Germans discovered the penetration, and by evening enemy tanks and 20mm flak guns were firing on our troops from the vicinity of Nemi; but the two battalions were on their objective at 1930, directly overlooking the Velletri-Nemi road. Road blocks were established by the 1st Battalion during the night and early morning of 1 June. East of these roadblocks the 2d Battalion, 141st Infantry, also reached the road; to the rear the 143d Infantry beat off disorganized, hasty jabs by the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division on Maschio d' Ariano. The Velletri-Valmontone line was broken; and the enemy position at Colli Laziali was doomed.

As the 36th Division unleashed its bolt, the 85th Division under General Coulter to its northeast was taking over the left half of the 3d Division zone. Fifth Army was ready for the last, all-out attack; the orders had already been issued for new offensives to crush the German Fourteenth Army. To carry out this mission VI Corps was to attack 1 June to secure that part of Colli Laziali in its zone of action. It was then to drive forward with the utmost speed to cut the routes of withdrawal for enemy units through Rome. Strong forces would be turned southwest to annihilate the enemy against the Tiber River, while long-range artillery interdicted enemy crossing sites. (See Map 28.)

In conjunction with the VI Corps push the 5 Division was to press forward rapidly toward the Tiber to cut off and destroy the enemy forces which VI Corps turned south. On the north side of Colli Laziali II Corps would block all enemy traffic on Highway 6 by securing the high ground north of Valmontone. It was also to take the northern part of Colli Laziali and then be prepared on Army order to pursue and annihilate German forces withdrawing northwest across its front. As one step in this policy, II Corps was directed to send the 1st Special Service Force toward Ferentino to make contact with the FEC, which was to press vigorously toward Segni.

During the next three days the attack by Fifth Army proceeded generally on the basis of these instructions, and 11 divisions smashed their way toward Rome in the greatest power drive Fifth Army ever launched in Italy. While VI Corps slugged its way slowly north toward Albano against stubborn enemy resistance, the troops of II Corps concentrated on forcing back the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division and then on exploiting the enemy withdrawal. On the 31st the 85th Division, the 3d Division, and the 1st Special Service Force were in line on the II Corps front; the 88th Division under General Sloan came up to Anzio during the day and after being attached to II Corps at 2130 moved to assembly areas near Rocca Massima. During the day action consisted chiefly of a limited attack by the 85th Division to take over the 36th Division positions on Maschio d' Ariano and to secure a line of departure for the main corps drive on the following day.

At 0500, 1 June, II Corps began its final drive on Rome. The first objectives set by corps were Highway 6 and the Cave road. The 3d Division attacked the enemy positions astride the Artena-Valmontone road to cut Highway 6 at Valmontone and drive on to the Palestrina-Cave road near Cave, thereby blocking off the enemy forces to the east. To screen the extreme right flank of II Corps the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron continued to operate beyond the 3d Division. On the left of II Corps the 85th Division pushed northwest toward Mt. Ceraso, the dominating height at the northeast corner of Colli Laziali. The 88th Division, when committed in the center of the line, had the mission of taking the high ground at Gardella Hill just across Highway 6 and southwest of Palestrina.

Opposition by the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Di-

vision was intense on 1 June, but our superiority in force gradually pushed the enemy back. The 1st Special Service Force took its objective, the high ground southeast of Valmontone, in the morning and consolidated its positions to guard the right flank of the 3d Division. The 15th Infantry advanced east of the Artena—Valmontone road, beat off several attacks by Mark VI tanks, and reached Highway 6 by the evening. On the left the 30th Infantry and Task Force Howze advanced more slowly against determined resistance. The 85th Division also met stiff opposition farther to the left. Directly north of Lariano, on the left flank of Task Force Howze, the 338th Infantry found the enemy so well intrenched along the steep railroad embankment that it made little gain until late in the day. The slow wheeling turn of the regiment northwest toward Mt. Ceraso produced a gap on its right flank which the 349th Infantry under Colonel Crawford filled at 1100. By dusk this unit had reached high ground just north of the railroad. The 337th Infantry under Colonel Hughes, pushing north along the wooded draws of Mt. Artemisio, met heavy opposition from infantry weapons on the north slopes of Maschio d' Ariano; the Germans also infiltrated through the dense foliage as far as one battalion command post. By dusk, however, this resistance was beaten back, and the 1st Battalion, 337th Infantry, aided by tanks made a substantial advance to the north. Throughout the afternoon enemy vehicles moved in column on the road toward Rocca Priora on the north edge of Colli Laziali, and gave fine targets to our artillery observers, who had dominating observation from Mt. Artemisio.

Realizing the hopelessness of his stand, the enemy began to withdraw on 2 June. The Hermann Goering Panzer Regiment moved from Valmontone toward Tivoli, and the infantry of the division fell back slowly, together with the remnants of other units under its command. Accordingly II Corps gained all its initial objectives during the day. The 30th Infantry found Valmontone unoccupied early in the morning and fanned out to the north and northeast to secure good positions in the vicinity of Cave. The 751st Tank Battalion lent support to this expansion, which effectively sealed the upper end of the Liri-Sacco Valley. The 15th Infantry advanced in column of battalions and took over the guard of the right flank from the 1st Special Service Force. On the division left the 2d and 3d Battalions,

7th Infantry, pushed as far as Highway 6 with Task Force Howze and then proceeded alone through the night to the vicinity of Palestrina. In the zone of the 88th Division the 349th Infantry held Gardella Hill by the middle of the afternoon; the 351st Infantry under Colonel Champeny swung northwest and cut Highway 6 about the same time. In the hills above, the 85th Division held Mt. Ceraso by late afternoon.

In the morning the 1st Special Service Force had reverted to direct corps control, and at 1100 it attacked down Highway 6 to gain contact with the FEC. Backed by the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and armor, it made rapid progress which culminated in a meeting with the French east of Colle Ferro at 1530. By this time the 3d Algerian Division, which had relieved the 4th Mountain Division, and the 2d Moroccan Division had swept up the last enemy stragglers in the Lepini Mountains and were pressing forward toward II Corps with all possible speed. After this second junction with our beachhead forces Fifth Army had a continuous line sweeping from the Moletta River around the slopes of Colli Laziali and on down to the Sacco River.

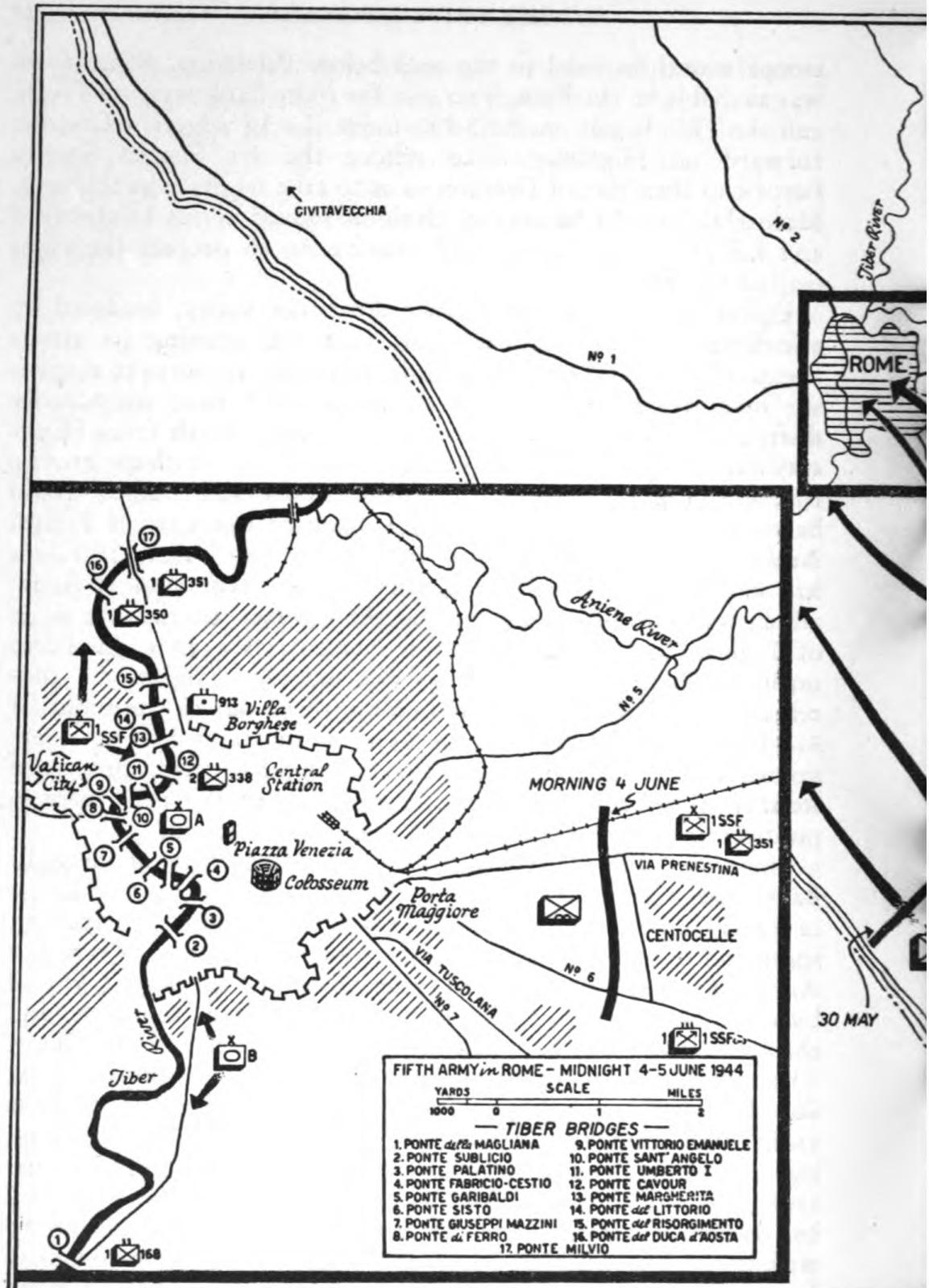
Late on the 2d II Corps issued orders to govern its advance on Rome. The last stages of the drive would necessarily consist of a great wheeling movement from north to west as the divisions of II Corps entered the narrow corridor between Colli Laziali and the hills at Tivoli. This corridor was divided into three divisional zones: the 85th Division to the south, the 88th Division astride Highway 6, and the 3d Division to the north. The long right flank of II Corps, which would be badly exposed during our left turn, was guarded by the 1st Special Service Force at Colle Ferro, the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron in the vicinity of Genazzano, and the 3d Division with one regimental combat team of the 88th Division on the line Cave-Palestrina; the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was to be ready to protect the extension of our right flank below Tivoli as our troops advanced. The corps order further laid down phase lines to coordinate the attack, but units were not to halt until they reached the last phase line short of Rome, the north-south road passing through Tor Sapienza.

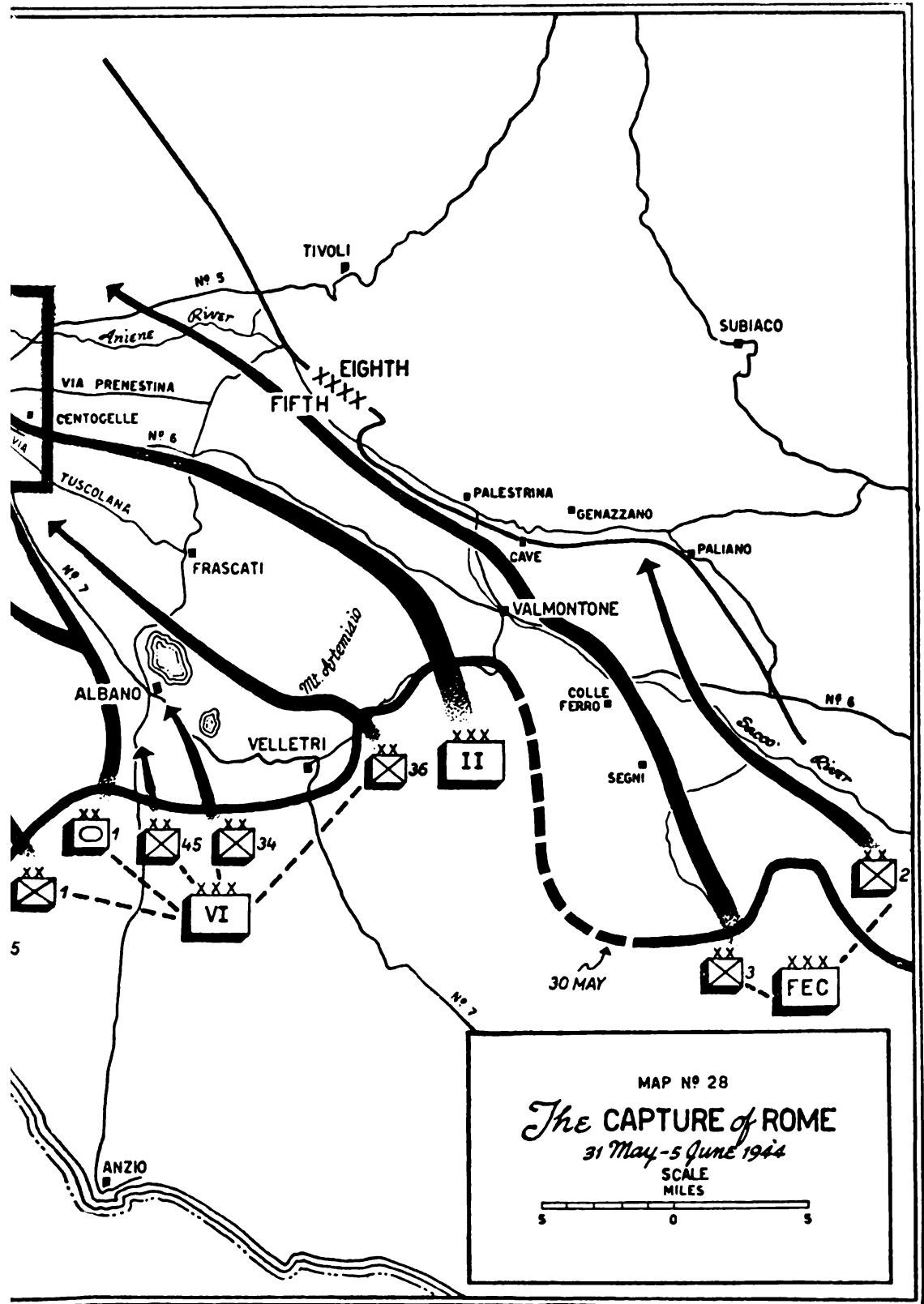
This wheel by II Corps to the west put it squarely in front of the FEC and the main bulk of Eighth Army, both of which were still well behind in the Liri-Sacco Valley. As a result a jam of

troops was threatened in the area below Palestrina. Some room was available to the French on our far right flank west of Tivoli, and the FEC began on the 3d to move the 3d Algerian Division forward on Highway 6 to relieve the 1st Special Service Force and then the 3d Division so as to take its place in this area. Meanwhile the 2d Moroccan Division moved across Highway 6 and halted facing Paliano and Genazzano to protect the right rear of the FEC.

Eighth Army was still farther down the valley, hindered by minefields and by thunderstorms, and was turning its attention more toward the Subiaco road. To permit II Corps to maneuver more freely AAI on the afternoon of 2 June temporarily shifted the boundary between the two armies north from Highway 6 to the road Paliano-Cave-Palestrina-Tivoli, with the proviso that when Eighth Army had drawn abreast the old boundary would be restored. As it turned out, the forward elements of Eighth Army did not reach the area in question until after II Corps had entered Rome. The 6 South African Armoured Division, which was scheduled to continue the advance on the left flank of Eighth Army, did not finish concentrating in Colle Ferro until 5 June. The final days of the drive on Highway 6 thus remained to II Corps. The reshuffling of troops in the night of 2-3 June caused by the shift in direction of attack held up operations slightly, but during the following day units proceeded steadily. By evening the advance elements of II Corps were in position to reach the Eternal City in one more bound.

Since the 3d Division was committed to the guard of the right flank until the French came up, the main attack toward Rome in the II Corps zone was delivered by the 85th and 88th Divisions, spearheaded by Task Force Howze on Highway 6. Company A, 81st Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, led the way, followed by the tanks of the 3d Battalion, 13th Armored Regiment, and the 756th Tank Battalion at a pace of five to seven miles per hour. The accompanying infantry (1st Battalion, 7th Infantry; 1st Battalion, 349th Infantry) were hard pressed to keep up, and the tanks were stopped beyond Colonna by snipers and antitank guns. When the infantry came up, they moved through the tanks, located in partial defilade on either side of the road, and by combined action with the tank fires forced the enemy to withdraw. The advance then continued until dark against stiffer opposition, especially from the north where the Germans were





guarding their escape route below Tivoli. During the afternoon three tank battles took place on Highway 6, but by dark Task Force Howze held the crossroads at Osteria Finocchio nine miles east of Rome. The 1st Special Service Force, which had been relieved by the 3d Algerian Division very early in the morning, then took up the drive at 2000. The enemy rear guard had now withdrawn, and the 3d and 2d Regiments pushed on to the final phase line near Tor Sapienza, four miles east of Rome, by 0400, 4 June. On their left the 351st Infantry was on the phase line at the same time.

Throughout 3 June our aerial reconnaissance reported heavy movements into the city of Rome from the area north of Colli Laziali around as far as Tivoli. The enemy plan evidently was to delay our forces north of and astride Highway 6 to permit completion of this evacuation; the 85th Division in the northern hills of Colli Laziali was sufficiently hampered by the terrain to prevent its constituting a serious threat, and in fact by dark it had only advanced to the slopes northeast of Frascati. Since our troops north of Highway 6 reached the last phase line short of Rome during the night of 3-4 June, the German plan was not carried out with full success. The entry of Fifth Army into the city could now be only a matter of hours, for VI Corps was threatening it from the southeast.

While the German left wing fell back before II Corps, the right wing had clung tenaciously to its lines opposite VI Corps. Our troops in this area were initially closest to Rome and must be held until the enemy to the north had cleared across the Tiber. Nevertheless, the Germans could not stop the 36th Division drive across the center of Colli Laziali, which cut west on the slopes above the Lanuvio line. As this division advanced, it rolled back the German garrison below it, first from Velletri, then from Lanuvio, and finally from Albano.

On 31 May the 34th, 45th, and 1st Armored Divisions continued the attack with no more success than on the past three days. Although the efforts were better coordinated than previously, the troops were exhausted, and the effective tank strength was low, chiefly as a result of the loss of tank crews. In the night the bulk of the 1st Armored Division passed to Army reserve. The enemy for his part pulled out some of his forces between Lanuvio and Velletri during the night, with the result that opposition in this area began to diminish on 1 June. The 34th

and 45th Divisions again made little gains on the 1st, but the 141st Infantry pushed ahead in its attack through the vineyards and orchards toward the strong enemy positions on the high hill of Velletri. The bitter fighting grew more intense as the enemy tanks and infantry attempted in the afternoon to break out to the northwest; many of our men used up all their ammunition and beat back the enemy sortie in hand-to-hand combat. At 1630 leading elements of the 2d Battalion entered the town and together with the 1st Battalion spent the night mopping up scattered enemy groups in the debris. A large number of Germans had been trapped and fell prisoner.

The 2d of June marked the eighth straight day of heavy fighting for the 34th and 45th Divisions—the most intensive and continuous battle in which any units of Fifth Army had been engaged since Cassino.<sup>4</sup> The end, however, was near, and the enemy finally yielded part of the Lanuvio line. Our advance was materially aided by the push on the right flank of VI Corps, where the 111th Engineer Battalion had finally opened supply and tank routes up Mt. Artemisio for the 36th Division. In this area the 142d and 143d Infantry attacked abreast at 0930 across the grainfields west of Mt. Artemisio and gained the eastern slopes of the hill mass in the center of the volcanic bowl of Colli Laziali. To reinforce this push the 157th Infantry was moved by truck from the left flank of the 45th Division to Velletri and then drove west along Highway 7, relieving the 36th Engineers and the 141st Infantry as it advanced. Such a transfer of an entire regiment from one flank to another demonstrated the mobility of Fifth Army, based on air superiority, availability of good transportation, and unceasing work by corps and division engineers in keeping up the road net.

The center of German resistance was by this time passing farther west to the front of the 45th Division, for if this unit could drive up to Albano it would cut off the retreat of the enemy to the east. On the 2d the 168th Infantry occupied the strong-points at Villa Crocetta and San Gennaro Hill to its front. In part of the 133d Infantry zone the enemy had withdrawn, but to the west—before the remainder of the 34th Division and all of the 45th Division—he held as firmly as ever throughout the day. Time, however, was now growing short, for II Corps had swept around the north side of Colli Laziali, and the 36th Division had reached the central heights. During the night of 2-3

June the bulk of the enemy accordingly pulled out along the entire VI Corps front.

On the 3d the 36th Division took Nemi and the central hill mass of Tano Hill and Mt. Cavo. A new unit, the 361st Regimental Combat Team of the 91st Division, had closed at Velletri on the evening of the 2d after landing at Anzio and was attached to the 36th Division; these orders were later cancelled as a result of the enemy retreat, and the 361st Infantry saw no action before the fall of Rome. On the south slopes of Colli Laziali the 157th Infantry pushed west toward Mt. du Torri below Genzano as rapidly as possible, impeded only by long-range artillery fire and by mines. The 133d Infantry and the 100th Battalion drove for this same point from the south after the 168th Infantry had occupied Lanuvio. Some intermingling of troops and accidental crossfire from supporting weapons took place during the afternoon and unavoidably delayed action in the area below Genzano for several hours; the enemy also was reluctant to yield Mt. du Torri, for this hill commanded his escape route through Genzano. The 100th Battalion finally took Mt. du Torri by 0100, 4 June; the 157th Infantry passed below the hill and reached the Albano road by 0345. At about the same time the 133d Infantry entered Genzano, and patrols to Ariccia reported Highway 7 clear to that point.

While the 34th Division advanced toward Albano from the southeast, the 45th Division continued its push north on the same point and directed an attack by both the 179th and 180th Infantry in the middle of the morning on 3 June. At first our infantry met the same small-arms and mortar fire as before, then opposition slackened, and in the afternoon enemy fire died down. By evening contact was lost. As the infantry began to advance, the 1st Armored Division (135th Infantry attached) moved up, preparatory to passing through the 45th Division when it reached the railroad. Late in the evening the armor crossed the railroad and went into temporary bivouac areas while Fifth Army was making its plans for the dash on Rome.

#### 4. FIFTH ARMY ENTERS ROME

4 June 1944

On the late afternoon of 3 June all the troops of Fifth Army were moving. On the slopes south of Albano, in the hills and plains of Colli Laziali, along the narrow valley below Palestrina—everywhere masses of infantry, tanks, and all the other fighting arms were driving at their great objective, the city of Rome. As the night came, some of these troops halted briefly for a little rest; others kept going and probed their way through the dark. To their front a beaten German army was retiring hastily through the city. The day's fighting had died down, but enemy planes once again swept over the highways behind our lines to bomb and strafe our troops through the night.

After dark new orders went out to our troops. The fall of Rome was certain; the important point now was to secure bridging sites in order that Fifth Army might continue the pursuit. Within and close to Rome there were at least 19 bridges over the Tiber, and plans were made to push small columns swiftly through the city to the bridges; to cope with the possible destruction of the bridges, equipment for temporary spans was brought forward in each corps zone. Primary responsibility for securing the crossings in the VI Corps zone was given to the 1st Armored Division; to the north II Corps sent the 1st Special Service Force and a battalion each of the 351st, 350th, and 338th Infantry toward its assigned bridges.

As our command had foreseen, the situation on 4 June called for the employment of speedy forces heavy in fire power, with the minimum number of troops: the latter both to avoid congestion on the narrow streets of the city and to retain maximum flexibility. A number of our divisions accordingly formed flying columns of tanks, tank destroyers, engineers, and infantry, usually based on a battalion or less of infantry and a company of tanks. The infantry were sometimes motorized by taking vehicles from the regimental service company or from the division quartermaster company; in other cases they rode on the decks of the tanks until opposition was met. Behind these spearheads columns of infantry advanced by foot and motor to the suburbs, but did not press into the city proper until the Tiber bridges had been secured.

All through the 4th the scene east of Rome was one of hectic excitement as our small columns drove at the Eternal City along the walled roads and through the close-packed suburbs. Veering

from one road to another as the opportunity presented itself, the spearheads occasionally crossed each other's path; but in general each proceeded independently of the others, and many soldiers had the proud feeling of being the "first in Rome." Here and there our men flushed out the snipers in brief, violent fire fights. At times the tanks barked briefly at an enemy self-propelled gun. And everywhere were the throngs of cheering civilians throwing flowers and dispensing wine with open hand.

The enemy, as events of the day proved, had no intention of fighting a major action within the city. By this time the uncaptured survivors of the two armies under Marshal Kesselring's command had escaped. The divisions in the Liri-Sacco Valley had mostly withdrawn through Avezzano and Subiaco; the broken units in the Lepini Mountains had slipped around behind the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division when it still held Valmontone; and that division had retired on 2 June below Tivoli. While the garrison of Colli Laziali beat its hasty retreat through Rome on the night of the 3d and the morning of the 4th, the 4th Parachute Division moved from the Ardea sector to serve as rear guard along the entire front. The bulk of this division cleared the city in the afternoon of the 4th.

During the day our troops met only mobile rear guards, whose sole mission was to check us temporarily. Snipers showed up now and again to the rear of our advance elements; self-propelled guns and tanks fired a few rounds from good positions and then withdrew in the maze of roads of the Roman suburbs. Only along Highway 6 and a road to its north, Via Prenestina, did a real action develop. Here a strong group of enemy infantry and self-propelled guns held its positions west of Centocelle from early morning until the middle of the afternoon, and thus delayed the 1st Special Service Force and the 351st Infantry for approximately nine hours.

Early in the afternoon our troops in this area launched an attack which broke the last enemy resistance, and the 1st Regiment, 1st Special Service Force, drove northwest to a road junction on Via Prenestina at the edge of the city proper by 1700. Here it met the 2d and 3d Regiments with the infantry elements of Task Force Howze, which had secured crossings over the Aniene River north of Tor Sapienza in the morning and then in the afternoon moved west along the railroad. The 2d Regiment passed through the 1st Regiment, reached Porta Maggiore at

1915, and arrived at the Central Station by 2000. One company turned off and was at Piazza Venezia by 1915, where it had a short fire fight with enemy mechanized troops. The 3d Regiment struck northwest on the right flank of the 2d Regiment and entered Piazza del Popolo at 2100.<sup>5</sup>

The companies of the 1st Special Service Force then fanned out to five bridges over the Tiber north of Ponte Margherita. At this bridge and also at Ponte di Littorio they met enemy guards with well emplaced machine guns, but by 2300 our men held the bridges in the II Corps zone. Behind them the 1st Battalion, 351st Infantry, and the 1st Battalion, 350th Infantry, advanced through the city toward the northernmost of these bridges. On the way the 351st Infantry and a group of the 1st Special Service Force, each mistaking the other for a German force, had a brief fire fight, but shortly after midnight the 351st Infantry had reached Ponte Milvio and the 350th Infantry Ponte del Duca d'Aosta.

On the right flank of II Corps the 3d Division completed turning over its old positions to the French during the day and concentrated toward the north of Rome. On the left the 85th Division sent ahead a mobile column from the 337th Infantry, which ran into elements of the 1st Special Service Force held up on Highway 6. Before the 337th Infantry could become involved in the battle about Centocelle, it was turned southwest by the division to carry out an Army order to cut Highway 7 in front of VI Corps. Clearing out a pocket of snipers, the regiment reached Highway 7 at 1700. Enemy opposition below Albano had so diminished by this time that the advance elements found the 1st Armored Division passing across their front. On further Army order the 85th Division stopped its southwesterly drive, and ordered the 337th Infantry to hold its advance positions. A mobile force of the 2d Battalion, 338th Infantry, approached the city on Via Tuscolana about 1800, cleared some opposition at the outskirts, and pushed on to Ponte Cavour during the night.

The advance of VI Corps was led by the combat commands of the 1st Armored Division, which received road priority on Highway 7. During the night of 3-4 June the armored units waited along the Albano road near the Lanuvio railroad line while their commanders received orders and counterorders. Finally, just after midnight, the combat commands were directed

to attack at 0345, 4 June. The advance guard of Combat Command A moved out at 0130 and threaded its way through the mines to Albano, then turned northwest on Highway 7. Below Castel Gandolfo it was held up just before noon by three Mark VI tanks with snipers, who forced it to halt temporarily three more times before reaching the outskirts of Rome. Here the 337th Infantry had already eliminated the major opposition, and after one brief fire fight at the very entrance to the city Combat Command A rolled about 1800 through Porta San Giovanni into the city. Making their way through the crowded, twisting streets, the tanks before midnight were guarding the approaches to Ponte Sant' Angelo, Ponte Umberto I, and Ponte Cavour.

Combat Command B, moving out at 0345, at first found only mines on the road curving along the slopes southwest of Albano, but as it turned west toward the Tiber it began to meet small-arms opposition. At an enemy strongpoint five miles west of Albano the main forces of the spearhead were compelled to deploy, and fought a running battle until after noon. At 1330 Company A, 13th Armored Regiment, and a platoon of tank destroyers were sent on to the south outskirts of Rome, followed later by the 2d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, in half-tracks. While these forces gained control of Ponte Palatino and the other bridges in the southern part of the city, the rest of Combat Command B moved out at 1500 in three columns to secure the two major Tiber crossings south of Rome. Minor enemy resistance caused occasional delay, but the armor held its objectives by 1800.

To the right of the 1st Armored Division the 36th Division cleared the last slopes of Colli Laziali and pushed on to Highway 7, where it was halted by 1st Armored Division traffic. The bulk of the 34th and 45th Divisions took no part in the last day of the drive on Rome, but task forces were sent by the two divisions to the two crossing sites south of Rome, which were also the objective of Combat Command B. Elements of the 168th Infantry reached Ponte della Magliana after dark; farther south the 45th Reconnaissance Troop and the 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, were at the lower bridge by 1900. Both of these bridges had been blown, and the engineers of the two infantry divisions, together with the armored engineers, set to work at once to throw temporary structures across the Tiber.

By midnight of 4 June troops of Fifth Army stood at the Tiber

from near its mouth to the junction with the Aniene River. Every bridge along that stretch had been taken and was under firm guard. North and south of the city the Germans had blown the bridges, but in the city proper all crossings of the river were intact.

The reception of Fifth Army by the citizens of Rome had been hysterical. While the hated Germans were scurrying north and west out of the city through deserted streets, the roads leading into Rome from the south and east were filled by its cheering citizens. As one tank commander put it, what the Germans had never been able to do the solid masses of the Roman throngs had accomplished: they stopped our tanks. Our progress everywhere was slowed by the thickly packed streets. Nevertheless, the enemy still lay ahead, and the Fifth Army advance proceeded without a break, II Corps pushing up Highway 2 and VI Corps up Highway 1. By dusk of 5 June the sound of battle had rolled far past Rome. The bulk of the combat troops was across the Tiber, with the remainder soon to follow. Pursuit of the broken enemy was continuing at top speed. For the first time since our arrival in Italy, Rome now lay behind Fifth Army.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

<sup>1</sup>There were several incidents in the Anzio drive which illustrated the difficulty in shifting from the defensive to the offensive; on at least two occasions troops refused to attack when ordered. In general, however, the shift was made without undue complications.

<sup>2</sup>On 24 April AAI informed Fifth Army that the two British divisions would not be used north of the Tiber and would revert to AAI after the capture of Rome. These instructions were the result of difficulty in replacements. Both divisions were relieved from VI Corps on 22 May and placed under direct Army control.

<sup>3</sup>American casualties for the entire Army on 23 May were 334 killed, 1513 wounded, and 81 missing, a total of 1928 and the high point of the Italian campaign. Three other days during the drive on Rome were particularly costly: 12 May with 1572 casualties; 31 May with 1207; and 1 June with 1539.

<sup>4</sup>The 34th Division had been forced to commit in the line not only the 34th Reconnaissance Troop but also the 109th Engineer Battalion.

<sup>5</sup>After our capture of Rome a long, and somewhat futile debate raged over the first unit to enter the city. By official fiat it was decided that the 88th Reconnaissance Troop, which made a sortie west on Highway 6, entered the city first at 0800; but, whatever the point reached by this unit, it is clear that the 1st Special Service Force was the first to penetrate the heart of the city in force.

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## CHAPTER VIII

# PURSUIT TO THE ARNO

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### 1. AFTER THE FALL OF ROME

TWO days after the capture of Rome Allied forces crossed the English Channel to open the long-awaited offensive in France. Two months later, on 15 August, the U. S. Seventh Army landed on the French Riviera and drove swiftly north to take its place in the Allied line along the Rhine. The action in France, which represented the major Allied offensive in the west, took precedence over the Italian campaign, both in men and in supplies. To the Normandy landings Fifth Army contributed the 82d Airborne and 7 Armoured Divisions, which had left the Army in November 1943 for England. For the Seventh Army attack Fifth Army surrendered two-thirds of its combat strength after the fall of Rome.

Among American troops VI Corps headquarters was assigned to Seventh Army on 15 June, followed by the 3d, 45th, and 36th Divisions before the end of the month. With them went the 1st Special Service Force, the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, 2 engineer combat regiments, 3 tank battalions, 3 tank destroyer battalions, 11 field artillery battalions, 13 antiaircraft artillery battalions, 3 chemical mortar battalions, and other combat units. Major losses among service units included 2 field and 3 evacuation hospitals, 4 ordnance battalions, 6 signal companies, 23 quartermaster truck companies, 6 medical collecting companies, 2 medical clearing companies, and 2 engineer general service regiments.

First of the French units to go was the 1st Motorized Division on 24 June, followed shortly by the 3d Algerian Division. When the FEC was relieved from Fifth Army on 22 July, the 4th Mountain Division, the 2d Moroccan Division, and three groups of *tabors* were lost to Fifth Army along with all the French corps troops. Since the British 1 and 5 Divisions also left the Army in June, though not for Seventh Army, Fifth Army had lost nine divisions and the equivalent of a tenth by late July. Its strength, which had stood at an all-time high of 379,588 on the fall of Rome, shrank by 15 August to 171,026, or less than half. During August Fifth Army was an almost exclusively American army, for the first and only time in the Italian campaign.

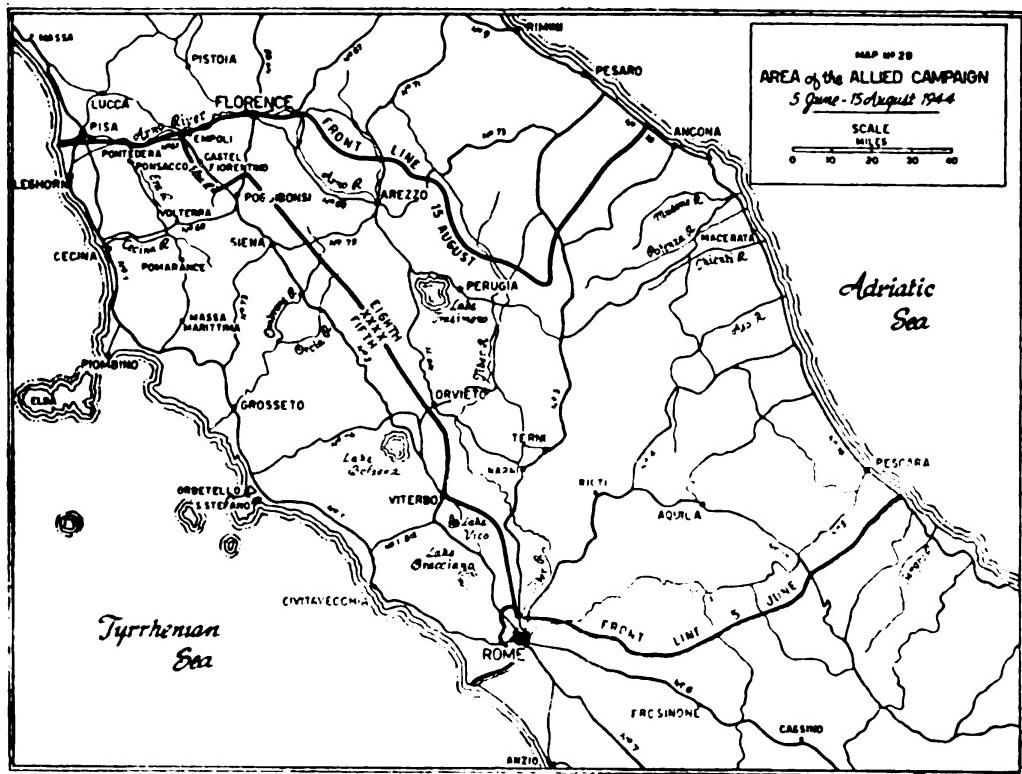
These considerable losses might make it appear that Fifth Army's offensive mission was ended, and to be sure it had at last reached its major objectives. Together with Eighth Army we had kept over 20 divisions pinned down in Italy and had drained German manpower and material throughout the winter to an extent which was considerable, though scarcely equal to the corresponding drain on our strength. Now that the "second front" had been opened and we had taken Rome, the first of the Axis capitals to be freed, the major part of our job was done and a great part of the Army strength might be diverted to more important areas.

The victory, indeed, had taken longer and had been more costly than was desirable. The last drive had been speedy and spectacular, for in a little over three weeks from 11 May we had crushed the Gustav Line defenses, had continued through the Hitler Line without a pause, and had broken out of the beachhead where VI Corps had been hemmed in for four months. But, whereas our command had hoped to be in Rome before the end of 1943, it had taken nine months from D-day at Salerno to reach the Eternal City. Up to 4 June the battle casualties of Fifth Army had been:

	<i>Killed in Action</i>	<i>Wounded in Action</i>	<i>Missing in Action</i>	<i>Total</i>
American	11,292	45,119	7,463	63,874
British	5,017	23,068	9,733	37,818
French	3,904	15,836	1,621	21,361
Italian	176	366	442	984
	<hr/> 20,389	<hr/> 84,389	<hr/> 19,259	<hr/> 124,037

Though we had taken 29,714 German prisoners during this same period, German losses had almost certainly been less than ours.<sup>1</sup>

Actually, however, Fifth Army was less than halfway through its Italian campaign, and the battles yet to come were to be severe, if less publicized than those of Cassino and Anzio. The objective now was to keep up the pressure on the German forces in Italy and prevent their withdrawal from the Peninsula; also to drive north so as to threaten Germany from yet another direction. The British, in particular, were deeply interested in the Balkans and so were eager to continue the Italian offensive with the aim of reaching the land gateway into the area at the head of the Adriatic.



Fifth Army troops accordingly did not tarry in Rome after the Germans left the city but continued to advance as rapidly as possible. The intention of AAI, as given in General Alexander's order of 5 May, was to pursue the enemy to the Rimini-Pisa line, inflicting the maximum losses on him in the process; in addition to this broad order Fifth Army was directed to capture the Viterbo airfields and the port of Civitavecchia, and thereafter to advance on Leghorn. Our next phase line, the Arno River, lay about 150 miles north of Rome; since Fifth Army was being reduced in strength, our zone would be about 45 miles wide along the Tyrrhenian coast, and Eighth Army took over nearly three-fourths of the widening Italian front.

The major portion of the area between Rome and the Arno is mountainous; however, there are no naturally strong defensive lines such as characterized the country between Naples and Rome. (*See Map 29.*) The land is rough and in many places hard to negotiate with vehicles, but in midsummer, without the handicap of bad weather, it could not be said to be tremendously difficult. The Fifth Army zone was naturally divided into two sections, the plain along the Tyrrhenian Sea and the more mountainous part east to the Army boundary. The coastal plain never exceeds ten miles in width and is generally narrower; occasionally the hills

come down to the sea. Inland, when the valley of the Tiber is left behind, the country is one mass of undulating high ground to the Arno, the mountains varying only in height and slope. The average altitude does not exceed 1500 feet, though numerous peaks stand out above that elevation. The backbones of the mountains run more or less in a northeast-southwesterly direction; lesser ridges are jumbled together at all angles with narrow valleys between. Except for a hill mass near the coast around Civitavecchia the country for 50 miles north of Rome is featured by gentle, rolling hills. Then the valley of the Ombrone River, the largest watercourse between the Tiber and the Arno, forms a broad flat area around Grosseto extending well inland from the coastal plain. About 20 miles north of Grosseto the steepest mountains begin. There is rough country for another 20 miles, culminating in a general summit on an east-west line through Volterra, marked roughly by Highway 68; from this line northward the hills are less steep and slope toward the valley of the Arno.

Only two sizable rivers cut across the line of Army advance. These are the Ombrone, which runs into the sea just southwest of Grosseto, and the Cecina, which enters the Tyrrhenian near the town of Cecina. Neither was a great problem. The road net also presented fewer difficulties than the area south of Rome. Two main highways run north from Rome through the Fifth Army zone: Highway 1 along the coast through Civitavecchia, Grosseto, Cecina, and Leghorn to Pisa, and Highway 2 inland through Viterbo and Siena to Florence; five main cross roads—1 Bis, 74, 73, 68, and 67—furnish lateral communications. In addition to these roads, some of which are paved and all of which are wide enough for unimpeded two-way traffic, there is an extensive network of smaller roads which meets the needs of the fairly dense population, especially along the coast and in the valleys. Settlement, however, is extensive even in the mountains, where hilltop villages, terraced vineyards, and olive groves mark the landscape.

In our pursuit we faced the German Fourteenth Army, which now held the western side of the Peninsula abreast of Tenth Army. As Fourteenth Army fled north of Rome it could be considered an army in name only. From 11 May through 4 June the German armies in Italy had lost more than 1,500 vehicles, 110 pieces of field artillery, 125 self-propelled artillery and antitank guns,

122 tanks, and over 15,000 prisoners of war. Casualties in killed and wounded were much greater. The vast majority of this loss had come from Fourteenth Army, and of its field divisions only the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division still remained an effective fighting unit. Four grenadier divisions of Army Group Southwest, the 71st, 305th, 362d, and 715th, were virtually destroyed for the time being; the 15th, 29th, and 90th Panzer Grenadier Divisions and the 44th and 92d Grenadier Divisions were hard hit. Much equipment was abandoned by Fourteenth Army in its disorderly flight, much more was destroyed by far-ranging Allied planes, which flew approximately 1,000 sorties per day from the fall of Rome to 19 June. Fifth Army troops pushed ahead along wreckage-strewn roads; north of Rome wrecked vehicles averaged one per 150 yards for 50 miles on one highway. On 6 June Army Group Southwest relieved General Mackensen of his command and placed Lt. Gen. (General of the Armored Forces) Joachim Lemelsen in charge of what remained of Fourteenth Army.

The Germans' strategy had been based on hoarding reserves, but this plan had ultimately cost them dearly. First they tried to hold ground, then gave up ground to save reserves. Finally reserves and ground both went, and as the fall of Rome grew imminent there was no choice but to bring in additional troops badly needed in other theaters. To save Fourteenth Army from complete destruction four new divisions were rushed into central Italy to plug the holes punched by Fifth Army's drive. The 20th GAF (German Air Force) Field Division, made up of ground force personnel from the Luftwaffe turned into infantrymen, arrived from Denmark; the 19th GAF Field Division was sent from Holland; the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division moved over from Hungary; and the 356th Grenadier Division was ordered south from Genoa.

With all the mobile units, including, in addition to the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division, the 90th and 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions and the 26th Panzer Division, pushed east of the Tiber, the enemy could put up only light and ineffective resistance along Highways 1 and 2 for the first few days after the fall of Rome. The 20th GAF Field Division arrived in time to be thrown into the line in the vicinity of Civitavecchia on 7 June, and the 162d Turcoman Grenadier Division, which had been guarding the coastline near Cecina against possible water-

borne invasion, moved into contact about the same time; but these two failed to prevent the port from falling into Fifth Army hands and the drive continuing on up the coast. The 162d Grenadier Division, which was made up of Russian ex-prisoners of war who "volunteered" to fight under German officers and noncommissioned officers, lost 2,000 prisoners during its first two weeks in the line.

The immediate aim of the enemy was to trade terrain for time, and Marshal Kesselring wisely made no major stand south of his naturally strong defensive belt, the Gothic Line, in the high Apennines 20-30 miles north of the Arno. Since this line was nearly 175 miles north of Rome, the retreat to it should give the Germans time thoroughly to reorganize their broken forces. Ultimate intentions of the enemy were clearly indicated in an order of the 19th GAF Field Division, part of which read:

This war will not be decided in this theater. To relieve our forces in the west the mission of our armies in Italy is to keep strong forces of the enemy occupied, to weaken his armies, and to inflict heavy losses in men and equipment.

Our tactical plan was necessarily that of keeping close contact with the enemy and slowing his retreat so as to cut off large bodies of his troops. The pursuit action fell into three periods, corresponding roughly with the terrain covered. From the fall of Rome until about 15 June the advance was very rapid through the gentle hill country north of the Tiber and in the Ombrone Valley around Grosseto. For the next month the chase led through more difficult country where the German defense functioned better and the gains were correspondingly slower. After Leghorn fell on 18 July and the mountains became hills near the Arno River the rate of advance increased.

Gains of 15 miles a day were not uncommon in the first few days of the pursuit. This speed, together with the extensive relief and transfer of troops, brought more difficulties in communications and supply than at any time thus far in the Italian campaign. The signal linesmen had great difficulty in keeping the telephone lines up with the advance; at times liaison officers with important orders or maps used Cub observation planes. Our dumps at Anzio sustained virtually the entire Army drive immediately north of Rome until Civitavecchia and then Piombino became available as supply bases. Up to the time that Civita-

vecchia was opened supply trucks were at times forced to travel nearly 100 miles for needed stores. Since trucks were urgently demanded by the forward units to speed their advance, the number available for supply could not be increased to meet this load.

The accelerated pace of combat was reflected most clearly in the consumption of Class III supplies. In April Fifth Army had used 6,818,088 gallons of gasoline; this expenditure increased in May to 8,514,655 gallons and in June to 11,947,986 gallons. Since there were no pipelines yet north of Rome and the rail system was out of commission, all of this fuel had to be moved by trucks. To improve the supply situation generally, dumps were opened as close to the front as possible, but the rapid progress meant an equal extension of the dumps; at one time the 90th Quartermaster Railhead Company was operating six truckheads. After mid-June, with the fall of Civitavecchia and the slowing of our advance, conditions became more normal.

The war outran other units too. One day the 11th Evacuation Hospital went into position 15 miles behind the front, its usual distance. By the next night the advance combat elements were 30 miles ahead. On 17 June the 8th Evacuation Hospital was six miles behind the troops, closer than any hospital of this type had been except at Anzio. To return casualties to base hospitals extensive use of air evacuation was necessary, and more than 8,000 casualties were so flown to the rear during our advance to the Arno. The early rapid progress also saw field artillerymen constantly going in and out of position, often without firing a shot. One armored field artillery battalion with self-propelled guns went three days without firing a round.

General tactics of the pursuit consisted of decentralization of command with formation of numerous small mobile forces utilizing all available roads. Armor was used to the maximum to speed the drive and infantry were carried in trucks whenever possible. Truck transportation, however, was short, and the available trucks were needed primarily to move supplies. Tanks and tank destroyers were attached to all infantry units to give them mobile fire power. These two branches complemented each other with considerable success, the tanks cleaning out machine-gun nests and other resistance points which hindered the infantry and the infantry in turn working around antitank guns which held up the armor. Throughout June and to a lesser extent in

July the pursuit was necessarily carried out with a minimum number of troops, for our lengthy lines of communication and supply were heavily taxed. As a result it was possible to alternate divisions and smaller units to give most men some rest.

Opposition was generally of the rear-guard type, with some instances of bitter resistance in strength. Hit-and-run tactics by small groups of German infantry and tanks were most often encountered. As a result of these tactics there was little need to coordinate our attacks on the Army level; throughout our drive to the Arno operations of the various corps were governed by the existing situation and by conferences among higher commanders, together with occasional Army directives to specific units. Attacks were launched on the corps, division, or even regimental level with the invariable mission of driving north as fast as possible. To take care of the flanks and to spare the limited infantry troops task forces of armor and reconnaissance elements were frequently employed. In the action, accordingly, there were no clear phase lines, and the advance of each unit had little connection with that of the adjacent troops; lower echelon officers were given much freedom in directing their units as they saw fit.

The terrain was as much a foe as the enemy. Ideal for delaying action, the mountains were hard on our men physically and on our vehicles mechanically. Bridges and culverts were plentiful along the coast and in the mountains averaged more than one per mile. These were methodically blown by the enemy, and Fifth Army engineers of all echelons were constantly called upon to make repairs and improvisations; in addition, the engineers had to repair many bridges and roads smashed by the Allied air force in weeks of bombing behind the enemy lines. At many points the speed of our advance depended largely on the rapidity with which the engineers could put in temporary bridges for the use of armor, artillery, and supply convoys. All service troops were called upon for extreme efforts to keep up with the advancing combat elements. Ordnance units especially were overburdened, since Seventh Army and other theaters had priority in equipment and parts as well as in personnel.

North of Rome Fifth Army encountered anti-German guerrilla bands in large numbers for the first time. These partisans were met in ever-increasing numbers as the lines moved toward the north, and though not as highly organized as resistance

groups in the Po Valley or in France the bands south of the Arno performed valuable service on many occasions. The partisans identified themselves by red-white-and-green armbands and carried a great assortment of weapons; some groups were led by escaped Allied prisoners of war. Occasionally the partisans joined Army units and fought alongside our soldiers; at other times they fought by themselves. Generally, however, the partisans proved themselves of most value to us as internal police in areas occupied by our troops before the Allied Military Government (AMG) could be set up and *Carabinieri* brought in to enforce the laws. It became Army policy to allow the partisans to carry on these necessary functions until local government was restored; then the partisans were disarmed. The partisans also ferreted out numbers of German soldiers who had donned civilian clothes and frequently brought in other stragglers who had been by-passed by our forces. As information gatherers and as guides the partisans were especially useful; in these respects the support of the Italian populace proved very helpful to Fifth Army throughout the Italian campaign.

## 2. THE PURSUIT IS ORGANIZED

5-20 June 1944

With tanks guarding the approaches to the bridges, our weary troops slept on the streets their first night in Rome while higher headquarters were making plans to pursue the foe. II Corps on the right held the northeastern sections of Rome and the country to the east; VI Corps was stretched along the Tiber from the center of the city southwest toward the sea. On the extreme left the British 1 and 5 Divisions were still short of the river line; on the far right the FEC was moving up along the right flank of II Corps.

Rome, a major prize, was safely under control except for scattered mopping up; on 5 June the 3d Division reverted to Army control to serve as garrison for the city. Few troops had gone far beyond the Tiber bridges on the 4th, but on the following day all units were ordered to push out at least six miles north of the river to obtain a secure bridgehead. Our men and tanks had difficulty in pressing their way through the narrow streets of Rome, packed with citizens celebrating their freedom, but by darkness the bridgehead line was securely held. Only light resistance, con-

sisting of a few towed 88mm and smaller antitank guns, occasional self-propelled guns, a tank here and there, and scattered infantry and snipers, was encountered.

Our troops now through the bottleneck of Rome, Fifth Army was ready for the initial stage of the chase. In accordance with orders issued on the night of the 5th, VI and II Corps were to drive north as rapidly as possible, II Corps under General Keyes on the right pushing up Highway 2 on Viterbo and VI Corps under General Truscott taking the important port of Civitavecchia. The 1st Armored Division was to spearhead the VI Corps drive, Combat Command A on the right in front of the 36th Division and Combat Command B on the left in front of the 34th Division. In the II Corps zone the 85th and 88th Divisions moved abreast, the former on the left of Highway 2 and the latter on the right. The FEC, which had crossed the Aniene on the 5th and had pushed to the Tiber, was halted so that the 6 South African Armoured Division could pass through and operate on the left flank of the original Eighth Army zone.

On the 6th Combat Command B raced up Highway 1 in the VI Corps zone and by dark was nearly 25 miles northwest of Rome. In accordance with the plan of advance the 2d and 3d Battalions, 168th Infantry, motorized on trucks, passed through the tanks at 2200 and moved on all night. By 1030 the following morning, 7 June, they had secured Civitavecchia, 40 miles from Rome; around this port the Germans put up only a short fire fight on the road northeast of the city. Though the harbor had been badly damaged, its availability greatly eased the supply problem. The first LST entered a berth on the 12th, and two days later Liberty ships began unloading in the roads. Cargo was soon coming ashore at the rate of 3,000, then 5,000 tons daily, thus shortening land supply lines approximately 75 miles.

After the fall of Civitavecchia Combat Command B swerved to the right into the 36th Division zone, and the 34th Division continued north by itself on Highway 1. The 133d Infantry, now in the lead, met advance elements of the 162d Grenadier Division and the 20th GAF Field Division south of Tarquinia on the 8th and beat them back in an all-day fight; early the next morning the 361st Infantry (91st Division) under Col. Rudolph W. Broedlow took over the coastal area under command of the 36th Division. Elements of Combat Command A, swinging east ahead of II Corps, occupied Viterbo without resistance early on

the morning of the 9th, then all of the 1st Armored Division went out of the line on the 10th, relieved by the 36th Division on the left and the FEC on the right. The 36th Division thus held all the VI Corps zone, which was narrowed by the westward shift of the FEC and of Eighth Army. At 1200, 11 June, the division and the coastal zone passed to IV Corps. By the time of the relief of VI Corps our line was nearly 65 miles north of Rome, but a small enemy counterattack on Highway 1, futile though it was, indicated that the days of 10-15 mile gains were almost finished.

On the right of the Army zone II Corps had already been relieved by the FEC. On 5-7 June the 85th and 88th Divisions had pushed north against scattered resistance, rounding up stragglers. Then the 88th Division was practically eliminated from the action, for the Army boundary was shifted to the left and the 6 South African Armoured Division was moving across its front. As on other parts of the Fifth Army line the enemy was running so fast our dismounted troops could not keep up. The bulk of the foe's forces apparently had been retreating night and day despite ground and air attacks, and the rear guards delaying us were usually motorized infantry and self-propelled guns which, when they disengaged, rapidly outdistanced our foot troops.

To cope with this situation two task forces were put at the head of II Corps on the 8th, Task Force Howze with armor, reconnaissance elements, and infantry on the left before the 85th Division, due east of Lake Bracciano, and Task Force Ellis (91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron reinforced) on the right in what remained of the 88th Division zone. On the 8th these forces advanced to a line within six miles of Viterbo, but on the 9th the FEC began the relief of II Corps; by the morning of the 10th all American units were out of the line in this area. Since the Army boundary had been moved west to allow Eighth Army the use of the routes through Viterbo, the French zone now lay almost entirely to the west of Highway 2.

At noon on 11 June the first part of the reorganization of Fifth Army was completed. IV Corps had replaced VI Corps in control of the 36th Division on the left; the FEC had taken over the II Corps zone with the 3d Algerian Division on the left and the 1st Motorized Division on the right. All other units were preparing for the move to Naples or were in rest areas. The use

of armor had not proved entirely satisfactory, and the pursuit henceforth was entrusted primarily to the infantry and reconnaissance troops with some tank and tank destroyer support. Viterbo and Civitavecchia had fallen; but the Arno still lay ahead.

In the next ten days, 11-20 June, IV Corps under General Crittenberger pushed forward more slowly than in the previous period but still with good speed. The 36th Division under General Walker, reinforced by the 361st Infantry, the 753d Tank Battalion, and the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion, placed two regiments in the line and relieved the forward units frequently; the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron screened the advance, and the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron protected the right flank. Despite occasional stiff actions our advance elements were on the Ombrone River by the 15th, and patrols penetrated into the town of Grosseto to the north. During the night and following morning the division crossed the wide and sluggish river, now at low stage, and drove on; a new unit, the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team under Lt. Col. George R. Walton, came into the line on the right of Highway 1 on the 17th to gain combat experience before moving to Seventh Army.

Since the area assigned to the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron on the corps right flank was too extensive for its strength, Task Force Ramey under Brig. Gen. Rufus S. Ramey was formed on the 12th from the squadron plus the 141st Infantry, the 752d Tank Battalion, and other elements. This provisional brigade pushed along the right flank of the 36th Division and maintained contact with the French. By the 20th IV Corps held a line running east from the junction of Highways 1 and 73; in the past ten days it had advanced 22 miles against steadily stiffening enemy rearguard action.

For the pursuit on the right General Juin entrusted direction of the action to a Pursuit Corps under Lt. Gen. Edgard R. M. de Larminat, who later became commander of the French I Corps in the Seventh Army landing. The two divisions of the Pursuit Corps darted about Lake Bolsena, the 3d Algerian Division under General de Monsabert on the west and the 1st Motorized Division under General Brosset on the right; when the corps boundary was shifted to the west on the 14th, a group based on the 1st Group of *Tabors* and the 1st Moroccan Infantry under General Guillaume took over the left flank of the FEC. By the 20th the French had pulled up to the Orcia River, a tributary of

the Ombrone behind which enemy resistance appeared to be stiffening. On 20-21 June the first withdrawal of French troops in preparation for the invasion of southern France took place when the 2d Moroccan Division under General Dody relieved the 1st Motorized Division, and the latter moved to Naples.

By 20 June Fifth Army had raced halfway up its zone between the Tiber and the Arno. A separate operation under the control of AFHQ, using French troops, had taken the island of Elba off Piombino on 17-19 June, thus protecting the left flank of our further advance; on the right Eighth Army was roughly abreast of the FEC on the line Lake Trasimeno-Perugia. Our reorganization was largely complete for the time being, except for the imminent relief of the 36th Division. However fast we had pursued, the enemy had retired more rapidly, abandoning stragglers, wrecked equipment, and a few rear guards behind him. At first his resistance was spotty, then in the past ten days it had stiffened, and our advance guards had occasionally been forced to stop, deploy, and engage in more or less severe skirmishes and small battles. The main enemy units used in this sacrifice mission had been the 162d Grenadier Division and the 20th GAF Field Division, tossed in before IV Corps, and the 356th Grenadier Division before the French.

### 3. THE ADVANCE TO HIGHWAY 68

21 June-7 July 1944

The enemy was now ready to turn and fight, for some of his better units had been able to reform, cross over from east of the Tiber, and reenter the battle after short periods of rest and reorganization. Fourteenth Army did not wait for entire divisions to be made ready but flung units as small as battalions into the fight. Thus the 1st Armored Division on the 24th took prisoners from nine regiments belonging to seven different divisions. Along the coast elements of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division were being identified by 20 June opposite IV Corps while inland troops were from the 19th GAF Field, 162d Grenadier, 3d Panzer Grenadier, 26th Panzer, 20th GAF Field, 4th Parachute, 356th Grenadier, 29th Panzer Grenadier, and 90th Panzer Grenadier Divisions. This imposing list of divisions did not represent a corresponding strength in combat troops since most of the units were far below strength. The 162d Grenadier Di-

vision, in particular, had lost more than half its forces in the past two weeks; the 20th GAF Field Division had also been badly cut up. To bolster the defense the 504th and 508th Panzer Battalions, the former rushed from France, were available, and mustered nearly 100 Mark VI Tigers between them.

With these forces the enemy, if not capable of making a prolonged stand, could within certain limits determine the circumstances of his withdrawal through the rough hill country north of Grosseto. Henceforth he had to be persistently routed out of his delaying positions and never withdrew until he was certain that our assaults were backed with sufficient strength to make it wiser for him to retire than to fight. He was constantly playing for time to rush work on his still unfinished Gothic Line defenses, and was not adverse to sacrificing lives to gain additional days and weeks. Along the coast the enemy fought especially to delay our advance on Leghorn and to permit systematic destruction of the dock facilities there, for he fully realized the value to Fifth Army of a large port so far up the Italian boot.

The enemy, however, could not, and did not try to stop us, and IV Corps and the FEC pushed steadily ahead. On 21 June, partly to meet the stiffening enemy opposition and partly to fill the widening IV Corps zone as the coast bent to the northwest, the 1st Armored Division (reinforced by the 361st Infantry) under General Harmon was committed on the right of the 36th Division and so replaced Task Force Ramey. The 36th Division was already being turned northwest to keep its flank on the sea, and continued up Highway 1 for five more days. The 25th of June was to be the final day of combat in Italy for the division, which had fought its way from the bloody beaches of Salerno nearly 300 miles up the Italian Peninsula. On its last day in the lines the 36th Division brought about the fall of Piombino and pushed the front forward as much as nine miles on the left. The port itself fell without a struggle in the afternoon when a small patrol from the 39th Engineers on road reconnaissance entered the town. A short battle occurred with Italian partisans who mistook the engineers for Germans; after this error was corrected the engineers and partisans rounded up the seven Germans left in the entire area. Salvage parties reached Piombino on the 28th, and three weeks later two Liberty ships could dock at once for unloading by steam cranes.

Preparations for the relief of the 36th Division had been made

for several days; since enemy resistance was still extremely fluid and entirely defensive, transfer of the coastal zone to the 34th Division was carried out with comparative ease, and control passed at 0700, 26 June. The 517th Parachute Infantry also left the line and on the 28th the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was relieved from its mission of screening the advance. In their place the 34th Division initially received the Nisei 442d Regimental Combat Team (less the 1st Battalion), the 100th Infantry Battalion, the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and other units. Before it reached Leghorn the division was to be a small corps in itself.

At the outset General Ryder placed in line three regiments, the 133d Infantry under Colonel Schildroth on Highway 1 to the left, the 442d Infantry under Col. Charles W. Pence in the center, and the 168th Infantry under Col. Henry C. Hine on the right. The latter regiment beat back a German counterattack in battalion strength early on the 27th, and then moved forward steadily. By the 30th the division had struck a serious snag at Cecina on the coast, and it became vitally necessary to secure the right flank against a possible German counterthrust down Highway 68 from the east. Accordingly the 168th Infantry was entrucked and rushed forward to the Cecina River. With the aid of Italian partisans mine-free crossings were found, and by midnight leading elements of the 3d Battalion had reached the north bank unopposed by the enemy. The entire battalion followed before dawn of 1 July, occupied a hill line a mile north of Highway 68, and blocked out approximately two and one-half miles of the road. In the center the 442d Infantry pushed up speedily and took the mountain villages of Belvedere and Sassetta by skillful encircling movements of the veteran 100th Battalion. On the 29th the regiment was relieved by the 135th Infantry under Colonel Manhart for the final drive to the Cecina, which elements of the 2d Battalion crossed on the following morning. The 135th Infantry and tanks of the 752d Tank Battalion spent the next two days in fairly heavy fighting to maintain the bridgehead and protect the main thrust of the 133d Infantry at the town of Cecina.

The advance of the 133d Infantry along Highway 1 had proceeded without serious difficulty to a point two miles south of Cecina proper, which the 3d Battalion reached in the late afternoon of the 29th. Then the battalion was halted on the road by

heavy fire from small arms and self-propelled guns, and by a small counterattack from west of the road. On the regiment's right the 2d Battalion slowly edged forward against heavy resistance until it reached a point about a mile southeast of Cecina where it also was counterattacked. When the 3d Battalion attacked again along the road just before midnight, it ran into an ambush and had one company severely cut up before the enemy was beaten off. To hold Cecina and block us from Leghorn as long as possible the major part of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division with some elements of the 19th GAF Field Division lay before us on either side of the highway. Along the sea were pine groves and sand dunes; the rest of the area was interlaced with small canals and ditches and covered with olive groves, vineyards, and open fields—the whole forming an admirable defensive position.

The 3d Battalion attacked again at daybreak on 30 June, supported by a platoon of tanks and by engineers to help clear the mines, which were spread profusely. Shortly after noon advance elements pushed to within 300 yards of the town, but a heavy counterattack from the west almost cut them off; in the end they were forced to withdraw about a mile back down the highway. The 3d Battalion had been hit hard; the 2d Battalion also had been unable to move ahead; so the reserve 1st Battalion took up the attack at 1800, pointed northwest between the other two battalions. For three hours it inched its way forward, but was unable to break the German line. At midnight the 133d Infantry, with all battalions in action, was still 1000 yards east of Cecina and considerably farther to the south.

Three hours later the regiment launched an all-out attack, the 2d Battalion advancing north and the 1st Battalion moving northwest across the front of the 3d Battalion. The SS troops again put up fierce resistance, but by 0630, 1 July, the 2d Battalion had cracked through elements of the 19th GAF Field Division and reached the river on the regiment's right flank. Tanks and infantry then turned west and entered the eastern outskirts of the town. By 1700 the part of Cecina east of the highway had been cleared; three hours later most of the west portion was occupied. A counterattack by 5 Mark VI tanks and about 100 infantry was beaten off, and at the end of the day the town was securely in our hands.

Fighting to the south of the town meanwhile had been a series

of fierce, close-in struggles against isolated groups of the enemy who resisted stubbornly throughout the entire day, but by evening the worst was over; the next morning the 1st and 3d Battalions made their way through the mines to the river. The battle of Cecina was the most bitter action yet fought by the Americans north of Rome, for it cost the 133d Infantry 16 officers and 388 men killed, wounded, or missing in action. With the other regiments of the 34th Division already across Highway 68, the entire division was now ready for the final drive on the great port of Leghorn, nearly 20 miles farther up the coast.

While the 34th Division was pushing north in this drive, the rest of Fifth Army was still pulling up to the line of Highway 68, which was not reached all along the front until 7 July. In the right half of the IV Corps zone the 1st Armored Division made its way forward on a front sometimes 20 miles wide in rugged, mountainous terrain where roads were few and tortuous. Initially Combat Command A under Colonel Daniel was on the right and Combat Command B under General Allen on the left on the Massa Marittima-Pomarance road, but the cut-up nature of the area dictated the commitment of the division reserve as Task Force Howze in the center on the 22d. The combat commanders took advantage of every minor road in their zones to divide their units into smaller columns; at one time during the early stages of the advance elements of the division were moving northward on seven different roads or trails. Seldom could more than two lead tanks in each column find firing positions off the roads; the progress of the armor was marked chiefly by small skirmishes which lasted half a day or less. Men died, others were wounded, but the advance continued.

At the beginning of July the left flank of the division was the most advanced with Combat Command B's left column looking down on Highway 68 about seven miles southwest of Volterra. The rest of Combat Command B, Task Force Howze, and Combat Command A were echeloned to the right rear. In the past nine days the division had advanced 33 miles as the crow flies, or nearly thrice as far as measured on the devious routes followed through the rough terrain. In the next nine days only six miles were gained, for the enemy defended stubbornly along the line of Highway 68. On the far right Combat Command A spent 1-4 July before the small hilltop town of Casole d' Elsa, ten miles southeast of Volterra, after a first try in which two infantry

companies were shot up and six medium tanks, three light tanks, and two tank destroyers were lost to enemy fire. The town was finally taken early on the 4th after seven attempts; thereafter the 1st Armored Division held its lines, pending relief by the 88th Division and Task Force Ramey.

Undoubtedly the most severe fighting anywhere in the Fifth Army zone during the advance to Highway 68 had been that on the 25-mile French front during 21-26 June. On the 20th the 3d Algerian and 2d Moroccan Divisions had been stopped south of the Orcia River, where the Germans had a naturally strong position extending on east into the Eighth Army zone beyond Lake Trasimeno. The enemy had dug pits for his machine guns and riflemen and backed them with a larger concentration of artillery than he had used thus far north of Rome. The center of this line along the Orcia was the strongest, for on the east the river line gave way to hills and on the west the upper Ombrone River Valley formed a by-pass running toward Siena. The Orcia itself was easily fordable. The enemy garrison, however, was formidable, with part of the 20th GAF Field Division, all of the 4th Parachute Division, and all of the 356th Grenadier Division from west to east; elements of the 26th Panzer and 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions were also present. Although the total number of infantry in positions near the river did not appear to be large, crossfire from well sited automatic weapons raked the stream.

After very little advance on the 22d the FEC put its emphasis on outflanking the line from the west. While the troops below the Orcia kept up their pressure, the Guillaume Group, reinforced by the light armor of the 4th Moroccan Spahis, pushed north along the west side of the Ombrone, fording the river on the 24th and keeping pace with the 1st Armored Division on its left. The advance of IV Corps and the Guillaume Group began to unhinge the enemy line, and at noon on the 25th the 8th Moroccan Infantry succeeded in crossing the Orcia just west of Highway 2. Later in the day the 3d Algerian Division to the left also crossed the stream against lighter opposition than previously. By the 26th the FEC was completely over the river; in the five days 22-26 June its casualties had amounted to 972 killed, wounded, and missing. To the right Eighth Army had also broken the section of the line before it, likewise after considerable casualties and fierce fighting.

Throughout the 27th the enemy continued to resist stubbornly

before the French, but in the night he began a hasty withdrawal, leaving behind delaying parties and demolitions to slow our advance on Siena. By 2 July we were close to the town, which the enemy promptly evacuated; at 0630, 3 July, Siena was in the hands of French troops. The advance continued despite further reliefs in the FEC for movement to Naples. All units of the 3d Algerian Division had left by the 4th, being replaced by the 4th Mountain Division under General Sevez; the Pursuit Corps was also disbanded, and General Juin took over direct supervision of the remaining operations. At Poggibonsi and Colle di Val d'Elsa, on Highway 68 southwest of Poggibonsi, enemy opposition stiffened once again, but by the morning of the 7th the latter town was taken by the 4th Mountain Division. By evening all of Highway 68 was behind the forward elements of the FEC.

Fifth Army was now everywhere up to or past the highway. On the left the 34th Division was already engaged in heavy battling on the approaches to Leghorn. Reliefs were planned to increase our strength on the right of IV Corps. To the east the French were ready to exploit the fall of Colle di Val d'Elsa, which had cleared Highway 68. The past two weeks had seen stiffening enemy resistance, resulting in the hardest fighting since the fall of Rome. Appearance of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division opposite the 34th Division had culminated in the stubborn battle at Cecina; it had taken the FEC nearly a week to crack the defenses along the hills north of the Orcia River. In the center the 1st Armored Division had slugged it out with infantry and tanks of the 26th Panzer Division in a give-and-take struggle through the Tuscan hills. Yet, though more mountains remained between Fifth Army and the Arno River, the worst ground had been covered, for ahead the mountains would soon give way to lower hills sloping toward the Arno Valley. On the left the Army was almost within striking distance of the great port of Leghorn; along the remainder of the line final steps in the push to the Arno River were being planned.

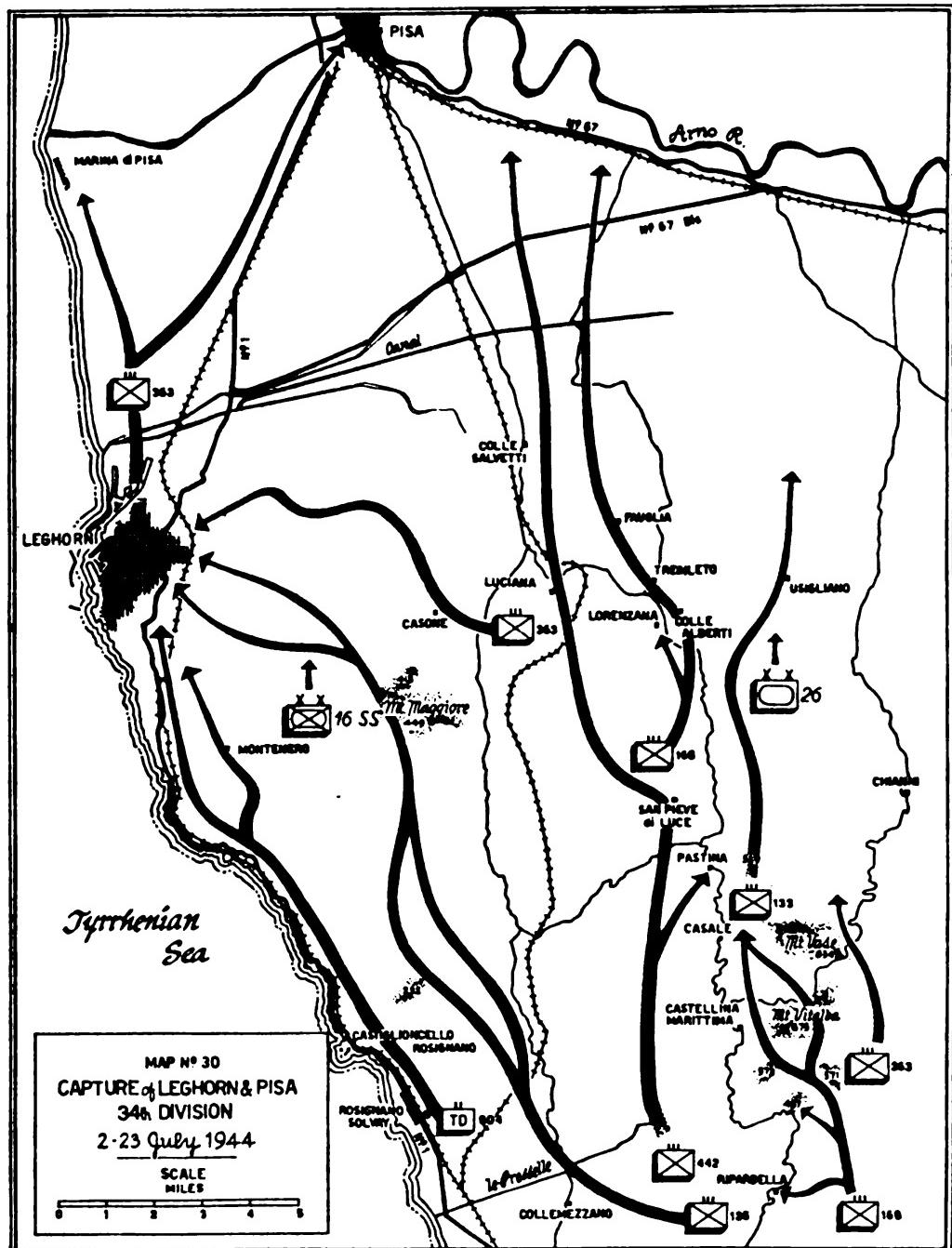
#### 4. THE CAPTURE OF LEGHORN AND PISA

2-23 July 1944

For the last part of the drive to the Arno Fifth Army increased its front-line strength considerably. On the right the 4th Mountain and 2d Moroccan Divisions of the FEC remained in the line until their relief on 22 July; on the left IV Corps used no less than three divisions plus a task force to speed up its attack. The strongly reinforced 34th Division continued up the coastal flank;<sup>2</sup> the fresh 88th Division relieved the 1st Armored Division on the right on 8 July; and the 91st Division under Maj. Gen. William G. Livesay, in action as a whole for the first time, took over the center of the IV Corps line on the 13th. On the 9th Task Force Ramey was assigned once more the guard of the corps right flank. Enemy resistance generally was still stubborn, and the 34th Division in particular had ahead of it two severe battles.

The 34th Division was to make the main IV Corps and Army effort beyond Highway 68 by driving straight north to the Arno, thus by-passing and isolating the port of Leghorn. (*See Map 30.*) Since Highway 1, which had been the principal axis north of Rome, enters mountainous terrain a few miles beyond Cecina, emphasis shifted to the inland valley north of Cecina, up which ran two roads, one on the valley floor and the second through Castellina Marittima on the eastern edge. The enemy, holding the rugged ridges on either side of the valley, again had the advantage of terrain; accordingly General Ryder directed the 168th Infantry to make the main effort of the division in the higher ridge on the east. In the center the 442d Infantry would push up the valley; on the left the 135th Infantry would drive first west to pinch out the 133d Infantry at Cecina, then turn north in the hills on the west side of the valley. The 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion and the 34th Reconnaissance Troop formed an almost entirely armored force advancing up Highway 1.

While the 133d Infantry was completing its battle for Cecina on 2 July, the other units of the 34th Division were maneuvering into their new positions. On the 3d they jumped off and made good progress until dusk, when the 135th Infantry on the left entered the southern edge of Rosignano. As the 3d Battalion reached the town it was heavily engaged by German infantry and was subjected to mortar and artillery concentrations. The other battalions on the right of the 3d Battalion also found themselves unable to make appreciable headway. In the valley the 442d Infantry drew heavy fire from the right ridge and was



pinned down on about the same line as the battalions of the 135th Infantry.

The ensuing six-day battle of Rosignano proved to be the most severe of the Leghorn drive. The elements of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division in the town resisted stubbornly, for Rosignano was the main western stronghold of the German defense line before Leghorn running east to Castellina, which was

holding up the 168th Infantry. Built on a hilltop about a stone castle Rosignano afforded an excellent view of the coastal plain for many miles, and its compact stone houses furnished good defensive positions. From the top floors of these houses the defenders threw hand grenades; from lower floors and cellars they poured out heavy fire from automatic weapons. An attempt to reach high ground east of the town failed, but in fierce fighting through the streets the foe was driven from the southern third of the town by the afternoon of 4 July. An attack by four Mark IV tanks and infantry was beaten off at 1830 with three of the tanks destroyed by our bazooka teams; an enemy infiltration attempt during the night was repelled by the defensive fires of our artillery. By the end of the 5th about half the town was in our hands.

Outside Rosignano on the 5th the 1st Battalion, 135th Infantry, succeeded in getting a foothold on high ground northeast of the town, and after an all-day battle the 2d Battalion, 442d Infantry, in the valley secured a ridge about two miles east and one mile north of Rosignano. Though these advances began to threaten the enemy in the town, the 3d Battalion did not reach the northern edge until dusk of the 7th; even then the enemy still held houses in the country immediately beyond the town. By dark two days later, however, both the 135th and 442d Infantry had reached positions four miles northeast of Rosignano and were engaged in cleaning up the remaining pockets of resistance. Along the coast the armor, after slow going for a week because of mined roads and demolished bridges, had passed Rosignano Solvay and had dismounted elements approximately on a line with Rosignano.

The advance of the 442d Infantry in the center was greatly aided by the gains of the 168th Infantry on the east ridge, which eventually eliminated most of the heavy fire coming from the flank. The fighting in this area had been almost as intense as that at Rosignano. After a sustained advance on the 3d the 168th Infantry attacked toward Castellina on the 4th, and the 363d Infantry under Col. W. Fulton Magill, Jr., was committed on the right, thus putting two infantry regiments on a front of less than four miles. The 2d Battalion, 168th Infantry, captured Mt. Vitalba (675 meters) and held it against three counterattacks, but the Castellina defenses proved too difficult to crack immediately. Led by the 3d Battalion, the 363d Infantry achieved

a gain of about a mile into high ground east of Mt. Vitalba. Then both regiments consolidated their advances and fought off German counterpressure in the form of numerous parties of 50 to 75 men who attempted to infiltrate down ravines and gullies.

On the morning of the 6th the attack was resumed. By noon the 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry, had entered Castellina from the east and south and finally cleared it after heavy fighting in the town. The 2d and then the 3d Battalion pushed up on the east, cutting the road which ran from Castellina northeast to Chianni. In mid-morning the 363d Infantry advanced across the heavily mined eastern slopes of Mt. Vitalba and just before dark seized dominating Mt. Vase (634 meters). This key mountain was heavily shelled by the enemy, and at 1130 the next morning after an especially heavy artillery and mortar barrage the 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment counterattacked. It drove the 3d Battalion, 363d Infantry, off the hill and forced our men back one-half mile to Hill 553, where our troops re-formed and held the line. Until Mt. Vase was again brought under our control on the 9th, progress was stopped; then the 168th Infantry pushed on to the village of Casale and silenced the guns which had been delivering flanking fire against the 442d Infantry in the valley.

Capture of the key mountains on the east and Rosignano on the west removed two of the strongest points from the enemy defense line. For the next few days the 34th Division slowly picked up speed, placing the main emphasis still on the right flank in the hills east of the inland valley. Here the 133d Infantry replaced the 168th Infantry on the 10th and spent 11-12 July in fighting for one hill (529); to the right the 363d Infantry passed to the control of its parent 91st Division on the 12th. During the night 12-13 July the Germans made a sudden withdrawal, and our troops drove forward more rapidly through the last of the hills and out onto the Arno plain by dark of the 17th.

Now the 34th Division was ready to pivot to the left and take Leghorn. The 135th Infantry had been pushing slowly northwest over hilly country toward the port; on the 18th the 363d Regimental Combat Team returned to the 34th Division as Task Force Williamson under Brig. Gen. Raymond Williamson to execute a double thrust at Leghorn with the 135th Infantry. The latter continued its attack toward the southeastern part of the city while the 363d Infantry came in from the east, reach-

ing the outskirts before midnight. At 0200, 19 July, the 3d Battalion, 135th Infantry, entered Leghorn after a brief skirmish with an enemy rear guard outside the city. The 2d Battalion and the 1st and 2d Battalions, 363d Infantry, arrived a little more than two hours later. There was little fighting in the city, but it was found to be heavily mined and booby-trapped; almost all the port facilities were destroyed, and the harbor was partially blocked by sunken ships.

In compliance with a corps order to advance the line completely to the Arno the 34th Division, now under Maj. Gen. Charles L. Bolte, moved forward again on the 22d. The engineers had thrown bridges over the numerous canals north of Leghorn, and the troops reached the Arno without trouble. While the 442d and 168th Infantry came up on the right, the 363d Infantry entered Pisa at 1330, 23 July. The enemy had destroyed all bridges over the Arno and was content to hold the north bank.

The rest of IV Corps was by this time already on the river. The 91st Division immediately to the right of the 34th Division had met stubborn German resistance in the first few days of its advance up the Era River valley, but by 0800, 18 July, the advance guard of the 361st Infantry had reached Pontedera on the Arno. The division had closed up to the river by the 23d. The other division in the line, the 88th under General Sloan, had taken over from the left elements of the 1st Armored Division on the 8th and likewise met considerable opposition in the first few days. To obviate attacking the high-lying town of Volterra our artillery and chemical mortars smoked it, and the division encircled it on the 8th, thus forcing the enemy to withdraw. At Laiatico, a small hilltop town eight miles northwest of Volterra, the Germans elected to make a stand before the 351st Infantry on the 11th, but in a second attack we took the town by a double envelopment which netted approximately 400 prisoners. Enemy resistance then slackened, and the division reached the high ground overlooking the Arno on the 18th. Since the FEC was somewhat behind IV Corps, Task Force Ramey patrolled the east flank of the corps after 9 July, at first only with armor and then with some additional infantry from the 88th Division. The enemy had apparently expected the 1st Armored Division to continue the advance in this zone and had mined and booby-trapped almost every trail, but by methodical sweeping the force had gained the Arno by the 23d.

Just as the FEC captured Colle di Val d' Elsa and was within 25 miles of the Arno River, orders were received that all remaining French troops were to be in the Naples area not later than 30 July, 23 days later. Plans were begun immediately for relief of the corps. Service troops were to go first, and line units were to stay on until relief could be provided by the British 13 Corps; then Eighth Army would extend its boundary westward to take in all the French zone. Numerous small German counterattacks along the French line on 8-10 July were utilized to give the impression to the enemy that it was his defensive efforts which were slowing up the French advance.

On the 12th the FEC engaged in a limited offensive to maintain contact with the enemy, taking San Gimignano on the 13th and Poggibonsi on the 14th. Two days later final plans for the relief of the FEC were completed. The zone was to be passed to Eighth Army control at 2400, 22 July. The 8 Indian Infantry Division and the 2 New Zealand Division were scheduled to relieve the 4th Mountain and 2d Moroccan Divisions, and all French troops were ordered to go on the defensive in positions held at the end of the 16th. No changes occurred the next day, but another enemy withdrawal began the morning of the 18th, apparently caused by the rapid American advance to the west. Both French divisions were forced to abandon their relief preparations and resume the pursuit until the 20th, when the corps front was about ten miles south of the Arno. During the nights of 21-22 and 22-23 July the advance French units were relieved, and control passed to the British as scheduled. The FEC then proceeded to Naples to prepare for the invasion of its homeland; tried in battle and confident in their successes, the French could well feel proud of their part in the Italian campaign since the first action in December 1943. Among the best mountain troops Fifth Army ever had, the French divisions had always shown dash and daring in their maneuver, as exemplified above all in their outstanding drive through the Gustav Line.<sup>3</sup>

## 5. REGROUPING ALONG THE ARNO

24 July-31 August 1944

By 23 July the troops of Fifth Army were poised along the south bank of the Arno on a 35-mile front extending from the sea to the Elsa River, 20 miles west of Florence. The FEC had been relieved; the reduction and reorganization of the Army were practically completed. Fifth Army now had five divisions—the 1st Armored Division, and the 34th, 85th, 88th, and 91st Divisions—and two corps headquarters (II and IV). Eleven of the 33 corps artillery battalions had departed, and others were to go in the next few months as the fighting on the Western Front grew more intense.

During the previous six weeks Fifth Army had driven 150 miles through the ripening grainfields and vineyard-clad hills of central Italy to the Arno. This progress compared very handsomely with our last pursuit of the enemy, from Salerno to the Winter Line; in the six weeks of that action we had advanced only 75 miles, though employing a greater force. North of Rome the terrain was more gentle, the weather was far better, and above all the enemy's forces had been thoroughly defeated.<sup>4</sup> Now, from the hills south of the Arno, our troops could look across the broad Arno plain to the serrated peaks of the Northern Apennines, the last mountain barrier blocking the approach to the Po Valley.

It was time for a halt. Having reached the Arno, the enemy before us was now ready to stop the series of rear-guard actions and retrograde movements which had marked the long and exhausting retreat from the Gustav Line. By throwing reserve divisions into the line and rushing reinforcements to battered veteran divisions Marshal Kesselring had been able to restore a semblance of organization in his order of battle, and the last 20 miles of our advance to the Arno were studded with hard-fought engagements. Now the enemy had behind him the Gothic Line, a series of fixed defenses even stronger than the Gustav Line. The war of movement was over. Unless the enemy elected to withdraw his troops from Italy, Fifth Army was faced with another difficult mountain campaign. Our men, too, were exhausted by over three months of action and they had outrun their supply lines. Though Leghorn was in our hands, it was not yet open; our lines of communication stretched far to the rear, to Piombino, Civitavecchia, and even farther south. During the pursuit these lines had sufficed, but a formal attack required more certain and speedy delivery of a greatly increased supply load, and thus

demanded also extensive maintenance work on almost all our battered mechanical equipment. A period of rest, regrouping, and building up of supplies was necessary before a coordinated attack could be launched, and if there was a lesson to be learned from the fighting of the past winter, it was that only a carefully planned and sustained attack would succeed.

Once on the Arno, then, Fifth Army assumed a defensive attitude, maintaining only light screening forces along the river while resting and training its units in rear areas for the river crossing and the assault on the Gothic Line. To permit the assembly of a strong defensive force IV Corps was assigned the greater part of the Army front with a purely defensive mission, while the bulk of II Corps was held back in preparation for the next attack; II Corps, however, did take over the extreme right with the 88th Division on 25 July.

The IV Corps front, approximately 30 miles wide, was held for the greater part of the period by Task Force 45 on the left and the 1st Armored Division on the right. Task Force 45, consisting of the 45th Antiaircraft Artillery Brigade and attached troops under Brig. Gen. Paul W. Rutledge, had been formed on 26 July to meet the pressing need for additional infantry. Since the few enemy planes venturing forth were usually out of range or too fleeting in their operations to be engaged by ground artillery of light caliber, it became feasible to use some of the automatic weapons battalions (40mm) as infantry. The antiaircraft units were relieved from their antiaircraft roles on the 24th, received infantry weapons in the next two days, and then replaced the 34th Division in the line. The new provisional division was composed of the 91st and 107th Antiaircraft Artillery Groups and the 2d Armored Group, each with two battalions of antiaircraft troops and attached tanks and tank destroyers. By rotating the units in forward positions and continuing an intensive training program in the rear under the guidance of infantry officers, the antiaircraft troops gradually mastered the fundamentals of infantry fighting.

During 31 July-13 August the right sector of the IV Corps front was held by a second provisional force, Task Force Ramey, made up of elements of the 1st Armored Division with tanks and tank destroyers. This force relieved the 91st Division and was in turn replaced by the 1st Armored Division, now under Maj. Gen. Vernon E. Prichard.<sup>5</sup> When the 91st Division was relieved

by Task Force Ramey, it was detached from IV Corps and came under control of II Corps. The division was then shifted to the east and took over the narrow sector which had been held by the 88th Division.

II Corps thus had the 85th, 88th, and 91st Divisions under its command. The 85th and 88th Divisions in reserve near Volterra and the 34th Division in Army reserve below Leghorn proceeded to rest and train while the front-line units patrolled the Arno, crossed its shallow stream to probe the enemy lines, and engaged in artillery duels. In training special emphasis was placed on the technique of river crossings and the peculiar features of mountain warfare; in respect to rest special service units, stage shows from the United States, liberal passes to Rome, and American beer helped to build up morale. Within eight days after our capture of Leghorn the first convoy of salvage ships arrived at the port, and work in restoring the harbor facilities progressed rapidly despite protracted shelling by heavy artillery and railroad guns located north of Pisa. Throughout August everything possible was being done to prepare Fifth Army for the coming battles.

Our halt actually was more protracted than expected, and shifts of our troops were extensive in August; for future operations of the weakened Fifth Army depended to a very great extent upon the progress and plans of Eighth Army. This force, now under General McCreery (formerly of 10 Corps), was responsible for four-fifths of the long Allied front with 16 divisions at its disposal. Advancing more slowly than Fifth Army, Eighth Army had occupied the portion of Florence south of the Arno on 4 August, completed the work of securing the remainder of the river line in the next few days, and brought its lagging right flank up the Adriatic coast beyond the port of Ancona. By mid-August, with the exception of the Eighth Army right flank, the Pisa-Rimini line, which had been the Allied objective since the Cassino battle, had largely been reached.

The initial plans for breaking the Gothic Line, as laid down by General Alexander on 14 July, called for Fifth Army to rest and regroup along the Arno until Eighth Army had taken Florence and cleared the stretch of the Arno to the west of the city; then both armies were to put their efforts in the center of the Allied line so as to break the Gothic Line on a 30-mile line between Pistoia and Dicomano, respectively northwest and

northeast of Florence. (See Map 31.) D-day for crossing the Arno was expected to be some time within 5-10 August, and Fifth Army planning in July was pointed toward this target date. The main effort of Fifth Army would be made by II Corps on the Army right flank in the vicinity of Montelupo, 12 miles west of Florence. IV Corps with its limited forces was to stage a demonstration east of Pontedera; in the weeks before the attack every effort was to be made to build up an impression of an attack near Pisa. On 7 August the tentative D-day was postponed to 19 August so as to permit Eighth Army to complete the regrouping of its forces and to take the high ground north and northwest of Florence. The 85th Division relieved first the 2 New Zealand Division in the area on each side of Montelupo on the 16th and two days later the 91st Division, both reliefs in preparation for the attack.

Until the 16th Fifth Army planning was based on the assumption that the Allied armies would launch the main attack on the Gothic Line north of Florence. On that date, however, General Alexander ordered a change in strategy. Accumulating evidence of the strength of the Futa Pass defenses in that area and the concentration of enemy divisions in the center of the line made it appear that an attack from Florence would at best be a slow and costly assault. The new plan of AAI was to throw the enemy off balance and to gain surprise by unexpectedly and swiftly shifting the main attack to the Adriatic coast. When this thrust had gained sufficient momentum to endanger the enemy's flank, Marshal Kesselring would be forced to throw in additional troops to meet the threat; and he could get those troops only by robbing other sectors of the line. As soon as he had weakened the central sector, Fifth Army was to be prepared to strike north along the original Florence-Bologna axis while Eighth Army broke into the Po Valley, exploiting to a line from Bologna to Ferrara. If the attack succeeded, the German Tenth Army would be caught in a trap between the two Allied armies. The plan was a bold one, designed not only to crack the Gothic Line defenses and reach the lower Po but also to destroy a large part of Kesselring's forces. Its success depended largely on the degree to which coordination and timing of the attacks and surprise were achieved.

If Fifth Army were to make an attack from Florence, it would need more troops under its command. Reinforcements from outside the theater, however, could not be expected in time

to help our scant forces in their drive through the Gothic Line. The 92d Infantry Division, composed of Negro troops, was on the way, but only the 370th Regimental Combat Team under Col. Raymond G. Sherman reached Fifth Army in August. It was assigned to IV Corps and took over a portion of the front held by the 1st Armored Division after 23 August. A Brazilian Expeditionary Force was also to come to Italy, but the elements which arrived in August were in need of additional training before being committed. The solution to the problem of reinforcements was found accordingly in the transfer of 13 Corps from Eighth to Fifth Army, thereby reducing the long front of Eighth Army and creating a better balance between the two forces. When effected, this change would create a new Army boundary running almost due north on a line approximately 20 miles east of Florence.

The new plans resulting from General Alexander's revised strategy will be described in the next chapter; at this point it may be noted that the principal effort was still to be made by II Corps, but the attack zone was shifted to the east to the eight-mile stretch of the Arno between Florence and Pontassieve and that 13 Corps was to share in the operation. D-day for the attack was dependent on Eighth Army's progress, but both corps were to be prepared to attack on seventy-two hours' notice after 0001, 25 August.

Extensive alterations in troop dispositions were now necessary. To permit the concentration of II Corps for the attack north of Florence, IV Corps was made responsible from 20 August for almost the entire Army front. With only Task Force 45 and the 1st Armored Division (plus the 370th Infantry) under IV Corps command to hold a line 55 miles in length, additional forces were necessary and were provided by the 6 South African Armoured Division under Maj. Gen. W. H. E. Poole, which shifted west from 13 Corps and relieved the 85th Division on 26-28 August. IV Corps now had 14 infantry battalions in the line, each holding a front of 7000-8000 yards. Behind this thin screen of forward troops the tank battalions of the 1st Armored Division provided a close mobile reserve, and two regimental combat teams of the 88th Division were available in case of need. II Corps assembled the 91st, 34th, and 85th Divisions with the bulk of the 88th Division in reserve in preparation for the attack. On 20 August the 442d Infantry (under the 88th Division)

relieved the 13 Corps troops on the narrow five-mile front of II Corps west of Florence.

In accordance with General Alexander's orders 13 Corps, commanded by Lt. Gen. S. C. Kirkman, passed to Fifth Army on 18 August. At the time of its transfer the corps was made up of the British 1 Division and the 8 Indian Division together with the British 6 Armoured Division and the 6 South African Armoured Division. The last named had been withdrawn from the line and was soon to pass to control of IV Corps. The other three divisions, in the line from left to right as just named, had generally reached the Arno by the time of the transfer. Apart from an advance into north Florence on 13 August the Fifth Army plan of attack called for 13 Corps to hold its positions along the Arno until passed through by II Corps. Weakening enemy resistance along the river after the 20th made it necessary to modify this plan in order to maintain contact, and 13 Corps prepared to cross the Arno on a broad front to the east of Florence. On the 24th the 1 Division under Maj. Gen. C. F. Loewen forded the stream without opposition just east of the city; on the same day the 8 Indian Division under Maj. Gen. Dudley Russell put its advance elements over west of Pontassieve. By the 27th both divisions were firmly emplaced north of the river, and Highway 67, though still subject to enemy shell fire, was open between Florence and Pontassieve. The 6 Armoured Division under Maj. Gen. H. Murray also moved up on the east bank of the Arno, reaching Rufina on Highway 67 on the 28th and Consuma on Highway 70 on the 29th against moderate opposition. The armor was now in position to insure that the right flank of 13 Corps along Highway 67 would not be exposed when the main attack jumped off.

The month of August was thus one of numerous shifts in position on the Fifth Army front. In addition to the changes required by the alterations in our plans, there were also mock concentrations and feints dictated by the equally changing plans to achieve surprise. At the outset Fifth Army feigned a buildup on its left flank at Pisa; then on the 21st we were forced to change our concept from that of gaining surprise for our own attack to that of concealing the main Eighth Army push. A pretended buildup in the Fucecchio area, ordered on the 16th, was extended to cover nearly all of the Army front, and in particular 13 Corps was directed to create the impression of a large

British force on its front so as to imply a major Eighth Army attack north and east of Florence. Though Fifth Army had thus to give up some measure of its own deception, the constant procession of troops moving east and west behind our lines throughout August must have made the enemy uncertain as to where our attack would come. The period of waiting for the attack was a trying one for German outposts along the Arno, and the enemy reflected his nervousness by an increased sensitivity to any move made by our artillery or patrols.

North of the Arno the month of August was also a period for enemy regrouping and rest while the Todt organization rushed work on the Gothic Line. Though Fifth Army had halted at the river, the Allies still possessed the initiative, and it was necessary for the enemy to rearrange his forces in accordance with what he knew or could divine of our plans. Above all Marshal Kesselring needed a mobile reserve to stem an attack at any point until other troops could be pulled out of less threatened sectors. Initially he secured this reserve by attaching infantry regiments to the 26th Panzer and 3d Panzer Grenadier Divisions to hold their sectors of the Arno line with a shell of troops while the bulk of the divisions lay in reserve. The 15th, 29th, and 90th Panzer Grenadier Divisions were pulled entirely out of the line. During the month the 3d and 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions left the Italian theater for France, and the 26th Panzer Division was moved to the Adriatic coast to help stem the Eighth Army attack. After our invasion of south France the Germans were forced to concentrate their reserves in position to strengthen their exposed flank on the Franco-Italian border; the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division thus left its reserve position behind the Gothic Line to join four weak divisions on the frontier. The coast about Genoa was entrusted to the Italian Army of Liguria under Marshal Rodolfo Graziani.

At the end of August Marshal Kesselring had 27 German divisions and elements of 6 still-forming Italian divisions in Italy.<sup>6</sup> The force immediately available to defend the Gothic Line, consisting of 18 divisions, was divided between Fourteenth Army on the west and Tenth Army on the east. Before Fifth Army, from west to east, were the 20th GAF Field Division at Viareggio, then the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, the 65th and 362d Grenadier Divisions, the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, and the 4th Parachute Division—all these in Fourteenth Army—and then the

left two divisions of Tenth Army, the 356th and 715th Grenadier Divisions.

Many of the units were still far below strength, and the 27 German divisions in Italy were probably equivalent to not over 15 fresh, full divisions. The process of reorganizing and strengthening the older and more experienced divisions and a period of rest had, however, improved them considerably over the condition they had been in on 18 July when Fifth Army first reached the Arno. Furthermore, the task of supplying these troops, though rendered difficult by our air force, was being successfully carried through. In a three-day period beginning 12 July all road and rail bridges across the Po River used to carry supplies to the Gothic Line were knocked out by our medium bombers,<sup>7</sup> but the Germans met this crisis by the use of ferries, pipelines, and ingeniously designed ponton bridges which were thrown across the river each night and then disassembled before daylight. Until the Allied troops could break through the Gothic Line and reach the Po Valley, the German position in Italy was as strong as at any previous time in the Italian campaign.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII

<sup>1</sup>Battle casualties of Fifth Army during the 24 days of the May drive were about one-third of the total during the 269 days from 9 September 1943 to 4 June 1944.

<sup>2</sup>On 6 July the 34th Division with its attachments reached a total ration strength of 36,034.

<sup>3</sup>Total French casualties in the Italian campaign were 5246 killed; 20,832 wounded; 1943 missing—a total of 28,041.

<sup>4</sup>One token of the extent of that defeat was the total of 16,969 prisoners captured in the drive to the Arno. Casualties of Fifth Army during 5 June-15 August were 3278 killed, 13,807 wounded, and 874 missing—a total of 17,959.

<sup>5</sup>The 1st Armored Division was completely reorganized in late July. The regiments were eliminated; in their place the division now had the 6th, 11th, and 14th Armored Infantry Battalions and the 1st, 4th, and 13th Tank Battalions. Tank battalions were composed of three medium companies and one light company; the division was approximately two-thirds its former size.

<sup>6</sup>At this time the enemy air strength in Italy consisted of approximately 40 single-engine fighters, 25 long-range and 20 tactical reconnaissance planes, 50 Italian fighters, and 35 obsolete Junkers 87s (Stukas). With the exception of occasional harassing raids at night by one or two bombers, our troops were hardly aware of the existence of the once formidable Luftwaffe.

<sup>7</sup>AAI had delayed ordering this operation until 10 July in the hope that some of the bridges might be taken intact when Fifth and Eighth Armies entered the Po Valley, but by that date a rapid breakthrough to such a depth was clearly impossible.

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## CHAPTER IX

# THE GOTHIC LINE

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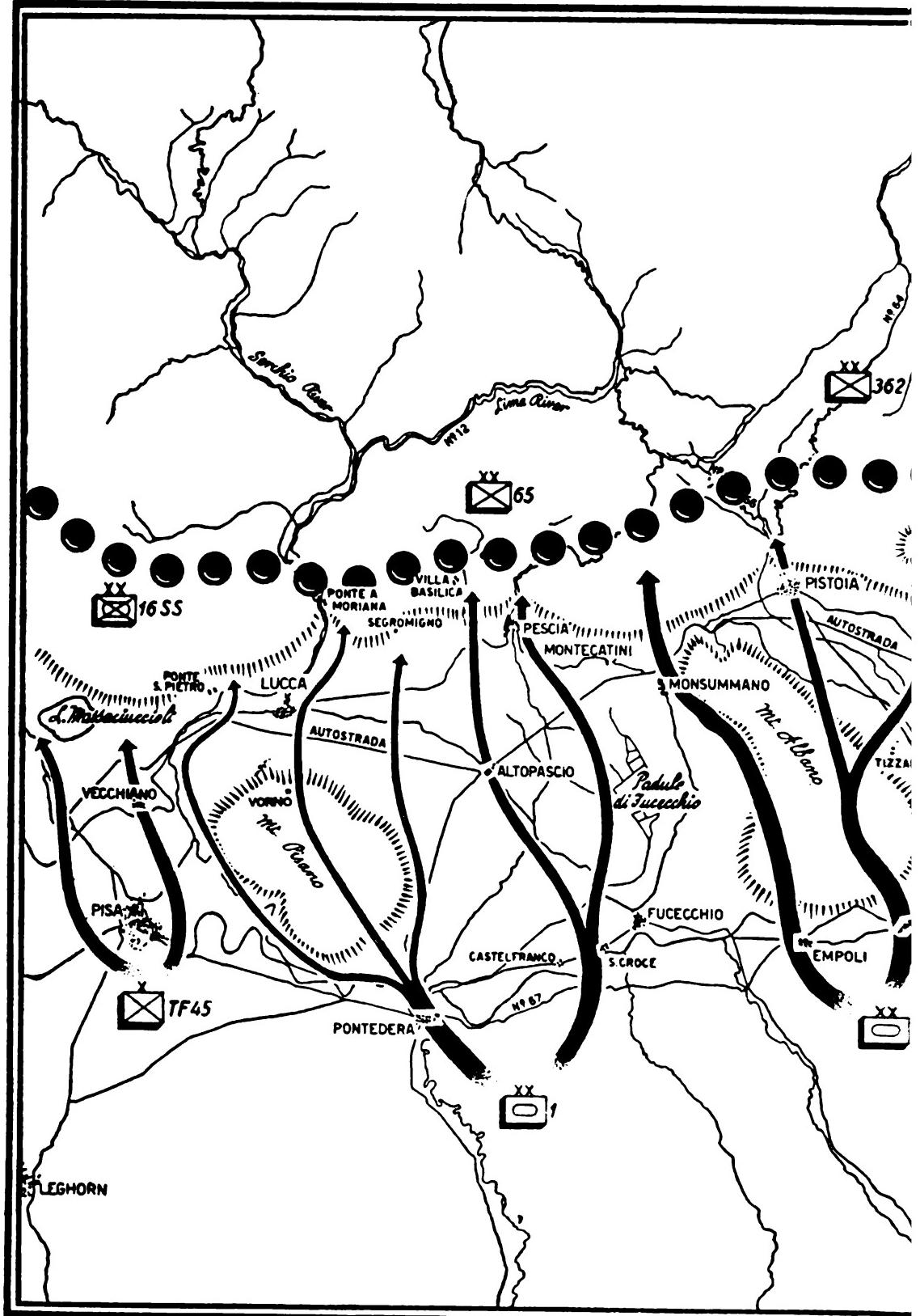
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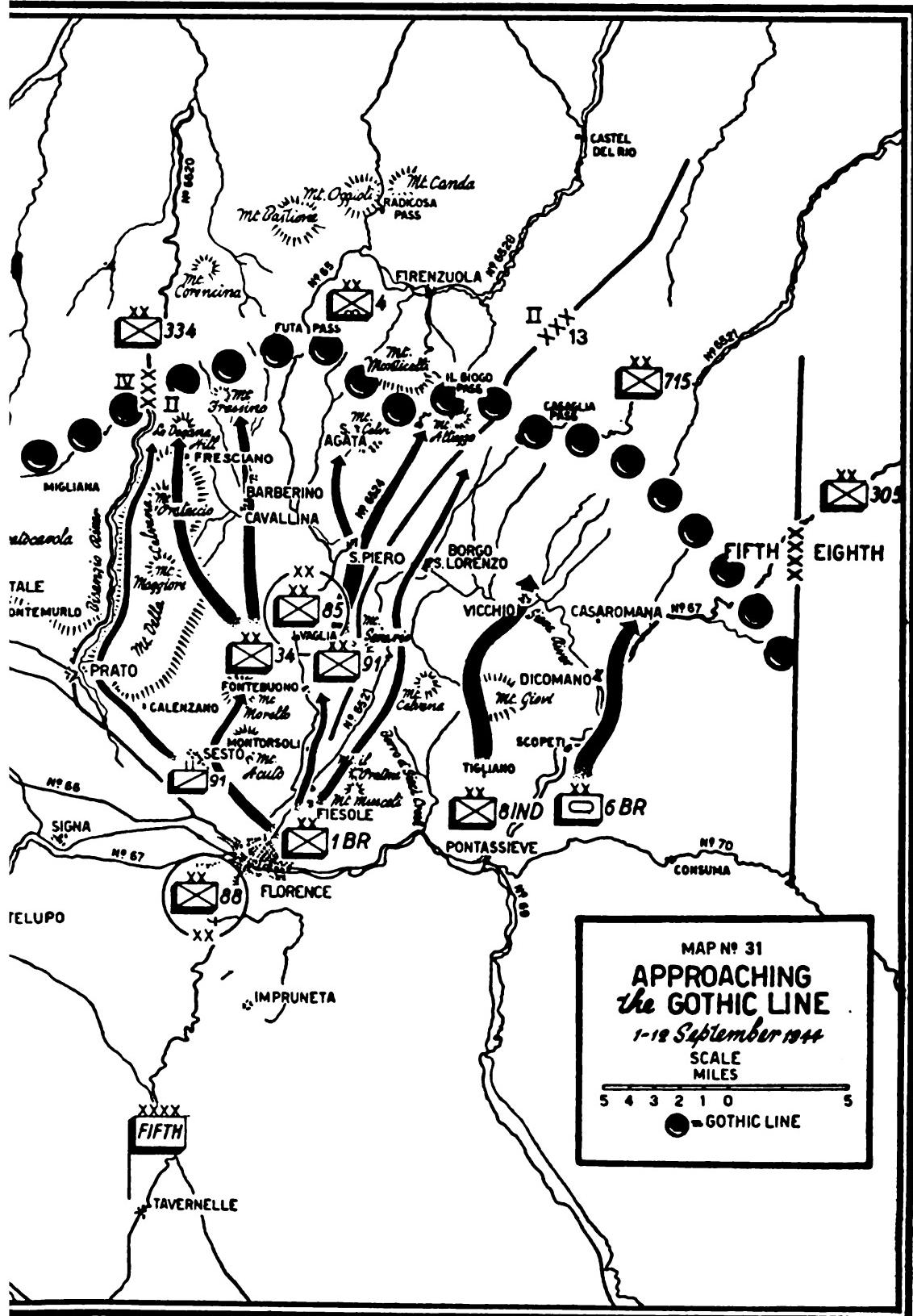
### 1. POSITIONS AND PLANS

THROUGHOUT August Fifth Army stood before the most formidable mountain barrier it was ever to face in combat operations in Italy. This barrier, known as the Northern Apennines, extends from the Ligurian Sea south of Genoa southeast across the Italian Peninsula nearly to the Adriatic below Rimini. Then the mountains run southwards close to the coast for a short distance before gradually swinging inland as the Central Apennines to form the backbone of the long Italian boot. On the north side the Northern Apennines meet the broad fertile plain of the Po River in a slightly curved, clean-cut line; to the south they drop away to the narrow coastal plain along the Tyrrhenian and in an irregular line to various plains along the Arno. At its narrowest point, between Florence and Bologna, the range is approximately 50 miles wide, and individual mountains rise to well over 2000 meters. For comparison one may note that the mountains of the Winter Line below Cassino had been nine miles wide and rarely over 1000 meters in height.

The ill defined summit line of the Northern Apennines lies closer to the southwest edge of the range so that the slopes which faced our troops were generally steep while those facing northeast are relatively long and moderate. The principal streams follow for the most part direct, parallel courses northeast to the Po Valley and southwest to the Arno and the Ligurian coast, and have cut numerous irregular spurs projecting between their valleys. A few creeks, such as the Sieve River, which flows almost due east 15 miles north of Florence, violate this pattern. The eroding effect of the mountain streams together with the irregular geologic formation of the Northern Apennines has served to divide the range into a number of compartments marked by broken ridges, spurs, and deep, pocket-shaped valleys, the whole offering to the enemy an excellent series of defensive positions.

The principal river valleys carry roads which cross the mountains by low passes over the watersheds. In line with the dominant pattern of spurs and stream lines these roads run northeast-south-





west, a single exception being the Florence-Bologna road, which follows a north-south axis. Of the seven main roads connecting the Arno and Po valleys, the chief in our operations were Highway 64 from Pistoia to Bologna and Highway 65 from Florence to Bologna. (*See Map 37.*) Few lateral roads connect the main highways, and secondary roads are limited in number. All roads are marked by twisting curves, sharp gradients, and narrow ravines; bridges over the mountain streams are often hard to by-pass; and landslides are frequent even without the assistance of German demolition experts.

In contrast to the rolling, extensively cultivated hill country of central Italy, the mountains of the Northern Apennines are so rugged that movement of wheeled or tracked vehicles off the road is seldom possible. In large areas cart tracks or mule trails offer the only local routes of communication. Villages are small and are generally confined to the valleys or lie along the main roads. The valleys, low hills, and lower slopes of the mountains are cultivated with grain fields, vineyards, and olive groves. Upper slopes are covered with chestnut trees, scrub oak, and pine forests wherever there is any soil, but many of the mountains have precipitous, bare rock slopes, razorback ridges, and occasional sheer cliffs.

Late in September the fall rains begin, mountain streams which virtually dry up in the summer months change to raging torrents in a few hours' time, and fog and mist, accompanying the cloudy days, often reduce visibility nearly to zero. By late October snow begins to fall on the higher peaks, and in mid-winter the passes through the mountains are sometimes blocked to traffic for short periods. The problems of conducting offensive operations in the mountains, difficult at best, would be greatly increased once the fall rains and cold weather set in.

Before reaching the Northern Apennines it would be necessary for Fifth Army to cross the Arno River and the broad valley lying between the river and the mountains. (*See Map 31.*) The Arno flows north from Arezzo to join the Sieve River at Pontassieve, 10 miles east of Florence, and then proceeds almost due west for 65 miles to enter the Tyrrhenian Sea at Marina di Pisa. The river averages 200-250 feet in width; its depth shows great seasonal variation, accentuated by a system of 20- to 30-foot levees on both banks which serve to hold the river in flood stages from spreading over the low, reclaimed land on each side. In late sum-

mer, before the September rains, the river can be forded by vehicles at several points, and foot troops can wade across almost at will. At Florence the foothills of the Northern Apennines reach south nearly to the river; west of Florence the mountains curve back to the northwest, leaving a broad, level plain approximately 15 miles wide on the north side of the river. This plain is broken only by the Mt. Albano ridge, 15 miles west of Florence, and by the Pisano hill mass, four miles northeast of Pisa.

Numerous roads cross the Arno plain; in particular Highway 67 and a four-lane superhighway, the *Autostrada*, connect the west coast with Florence, which was to be our main communications center. Roads east of Florence, however, were fewer. The Germans were better off in this respect, for the road net in the Po Valley is more extensive and better integrated than the corresponding facilities south of the Apennines. In particular Highway 9 runs along the northern edge of the mountains from Rimini to Milan through Forli, Bologna, Modena, Reggio, and Parma, all of which points are termini of highways crossing the mountains. Until our troops could cut this key highway it would be easy for the Germans to switch troops rapidly from one part of the front to another and to keep supplies moving up the roads into the mountains. Furthermore, in direct proportion to the distance our troops pushed forward into the mountains the advantage held by the enemy in logistics would increase.

The Germans began the work of constructing defenses in the Northern Apennines when Fifth Army was still engaged in breaking through the Winter Line 250 miles to the south. Under the direction of the Todt organization approximately 15,000 Italians were herded into labor camps and were forced to do the manual labor of digging antitank ditches, gun emplacements, machine-gun and rifle pits, trenches, and personnel shelters. Work continued at an increasing tempo during the summer months as the Allied armies drove past Rome and drew closer to northern Italy. The stiff resistance our troops met as they approached the Arno was in part due to enemy efforts to complete the defenses before falling back to the mountains.

The main line of defenses, named by the Germans the Gothic Line, was sited to take maximum advantage of the rugged mountains and the limited number of roads across them. In general it followed the south side of the water divide rather than the crest line which, though higher, is more irregular and is pierced

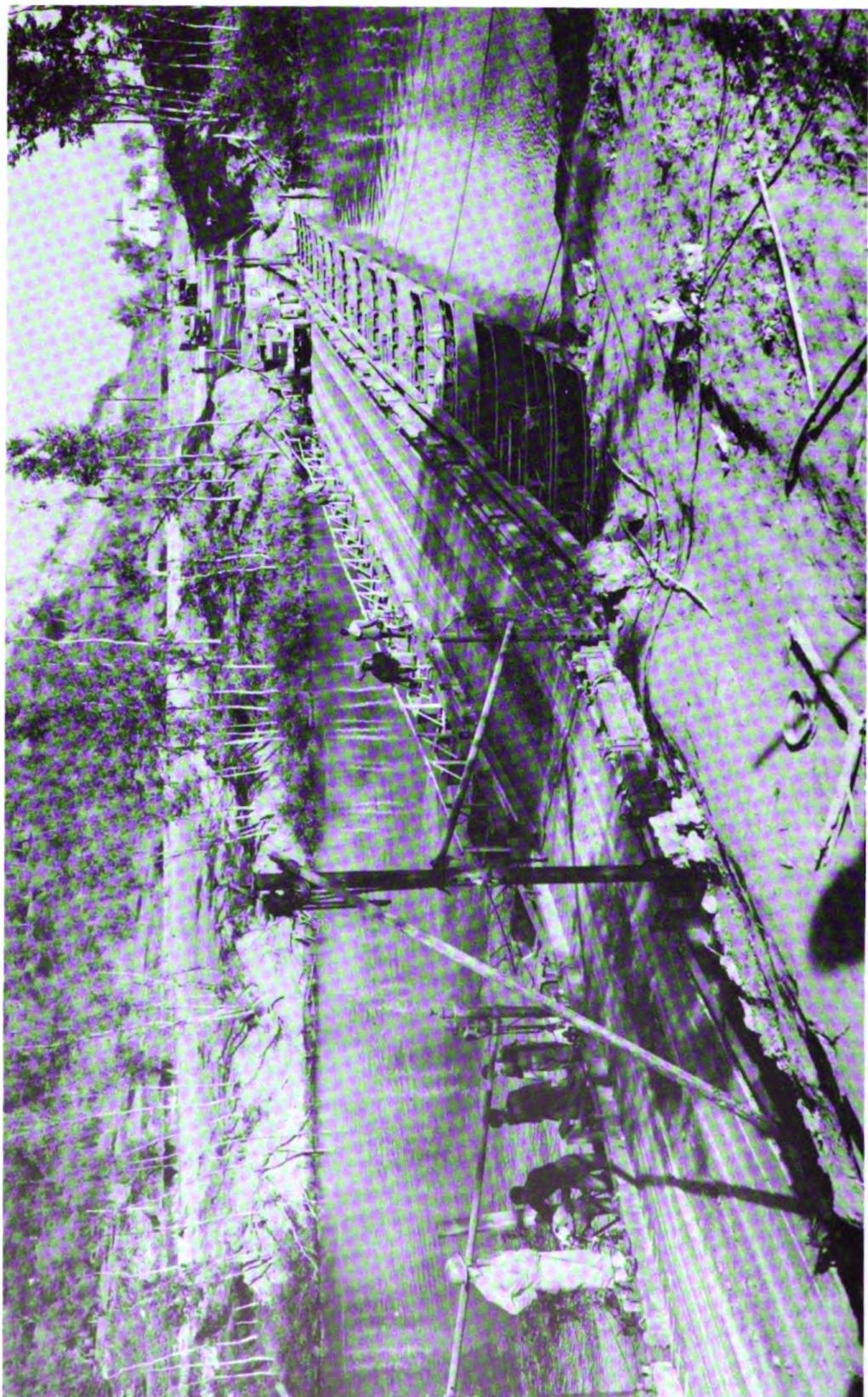
at several points by streams flowing northeast into the Po Valley. Starting from the west coast near the town of Massa, the Gothic Line swung southeast through the heights overlooking the Ligurian coast, then east across the narrow valley of the Serchio River, and through the mountains north of Lucca and Pistoia. The line formed an arc around the headwaters of the Sieve River, crossed Highway 65 below Futa Pass, and then turned southeast again to follow the main Apennine ridge to the headwaters of the Foglia River where it bent northeast to reach the Adriatic near Pesaro. The total length of the line was approximately 170 miles.

This distance was too great to permit continuous fortification, but the paucity of good roads and passes made it possible for the Germans to concentrate their defensive works at a few key points—our troops were to encounter strongpoints in the Gothic Line equal to anything met at Cassino. Topographically the weakest point in the Gothic Line was along Highway 65, which crosses the major divide at Futa Pass (903 meters). Since this highway was the logical route for an attacking force to follow, the Germans made Futa Pass, or more particularly the ridge two miles to the south up which the highway mounts, the strongest point in the Gothic Line defenses. In addition to concrete pill-boxes and gun bunkers, shelters, trenches, and low-lying wire, they constructed an antitank ditch three miles long and laid elaborate antitank minefields. On either side of Futa Pass similar defenses extended for about seven miles, west to the hills covering the Prato-Bologna road (Highway 6620) and east to beyond Il Giogo Pass on the road from San Piero to Firenzuola (Highway 6524). For the remaining 150 miles of the Gothic Line the Germans relied heavily on the natural defenses provided by the rugged mountains, concentrating their pillboxes, minefields, and tank obstacles to cover the river valleys and the passes. In the Arno Valley and the hills up to the Gothic Line various delaying lines were reported by prisoners and Italians, but these lines proved to be small obstacles; only on the Ligurian coast north of the Arno were German defenses extensive in the plain, with the object here of meeting any amphibious attacks.

No operation of Fifth Army began with as many uncertainties as the attack on the Gothic Line. Whether the enemy would elect to hold his delaying positions in strength or would draw back quickly to the Gothic Line when our attack was launched



The town of Altavilla, a key point in the Salerno fighting



VI Corps bridge over the Volturno River at Trifisico



Laying wire in the mud before the Winter Line



Pack train in the mountains (Sketch by Edward A. Reep)



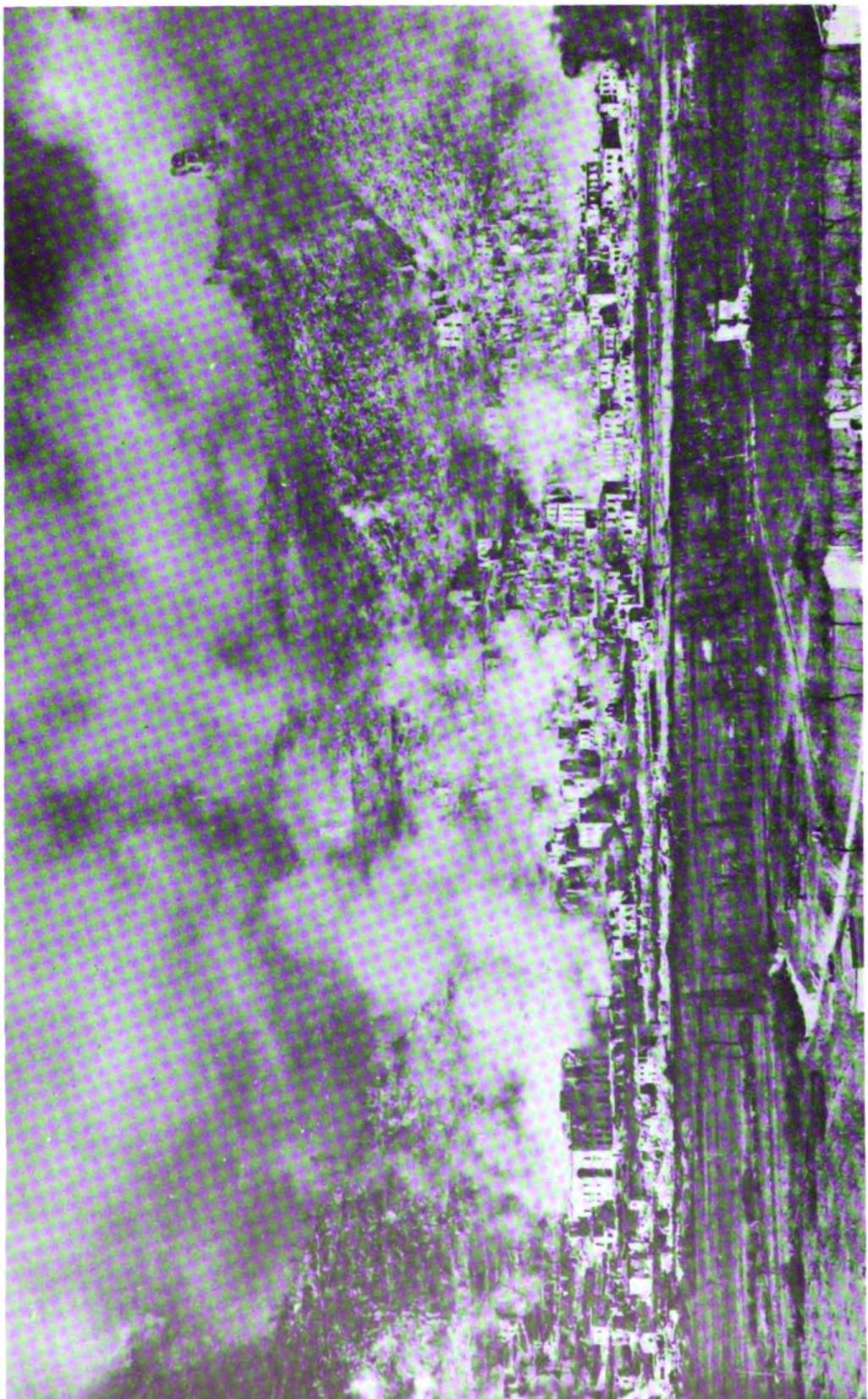
Mount Sammuco with Highway 6 in the foreground; San Pietro to right rear



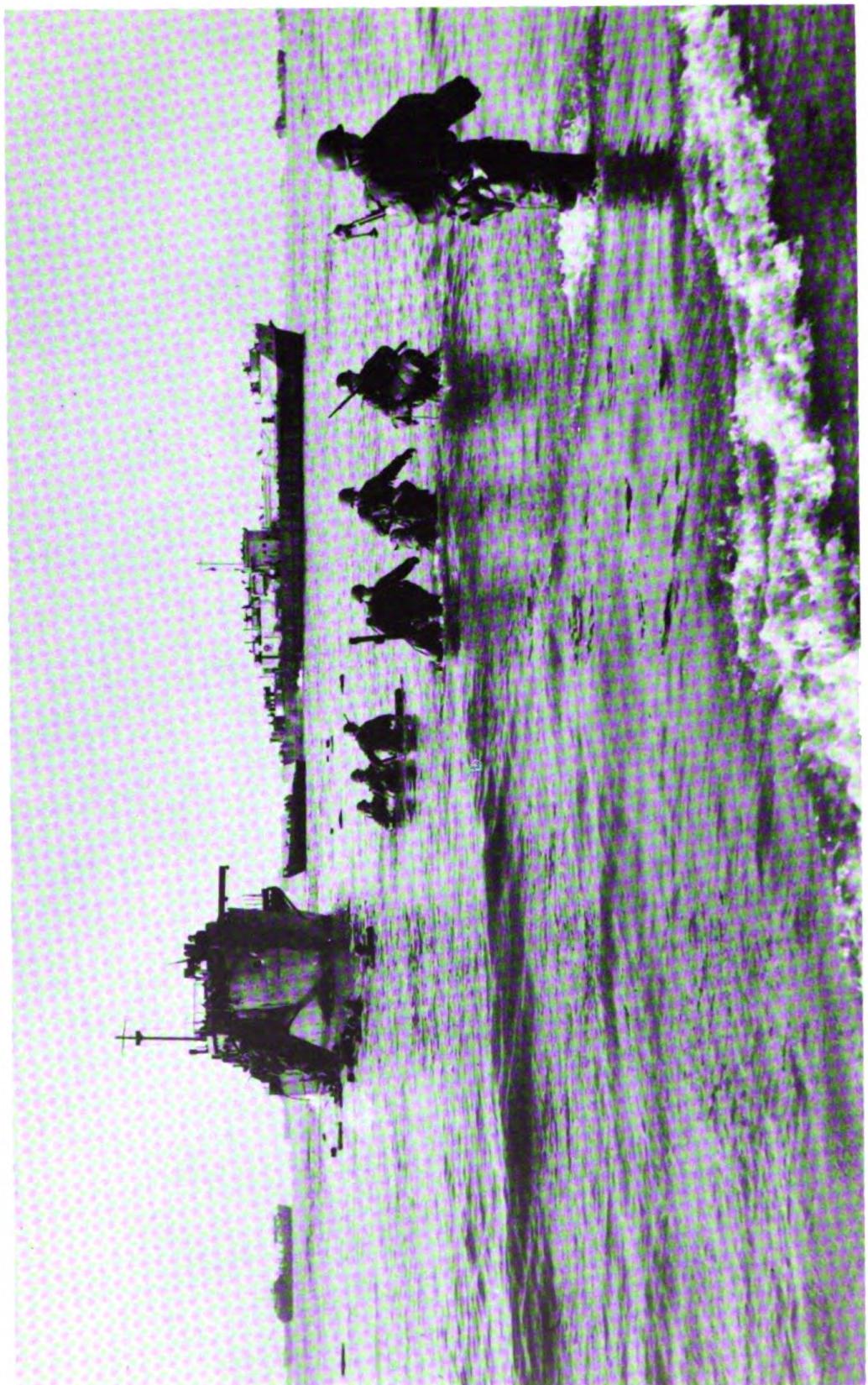
The Cassino battlefield, looking across the Rapido Valley to Mount Cairo



Bombing the Abbey (15 February 1944); Castle Hill in the middle distance



Bombing of Cassino, 15 March 1944



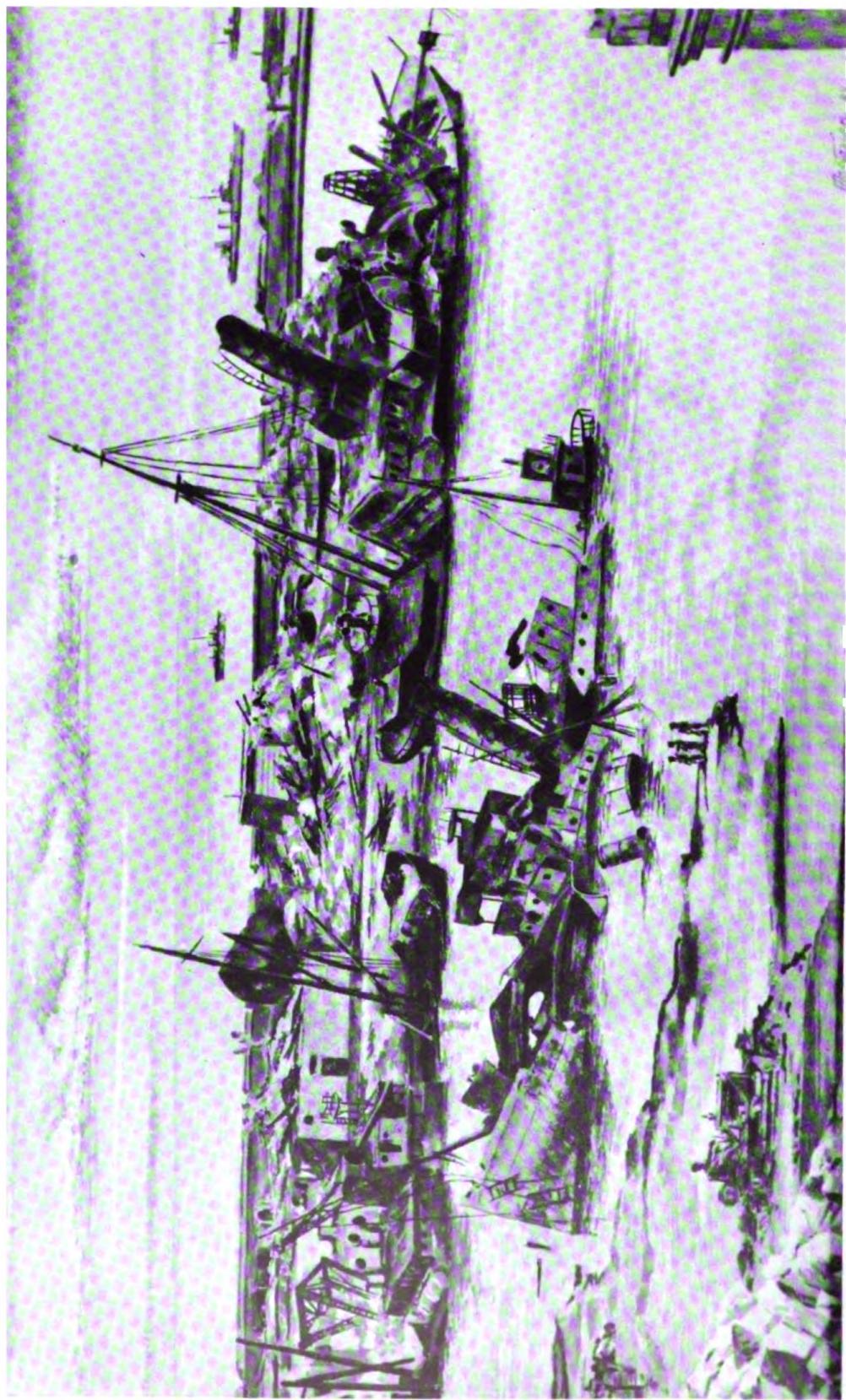
D-day at Anzio



Wounded at Anzio being evacuated to Naples by sea



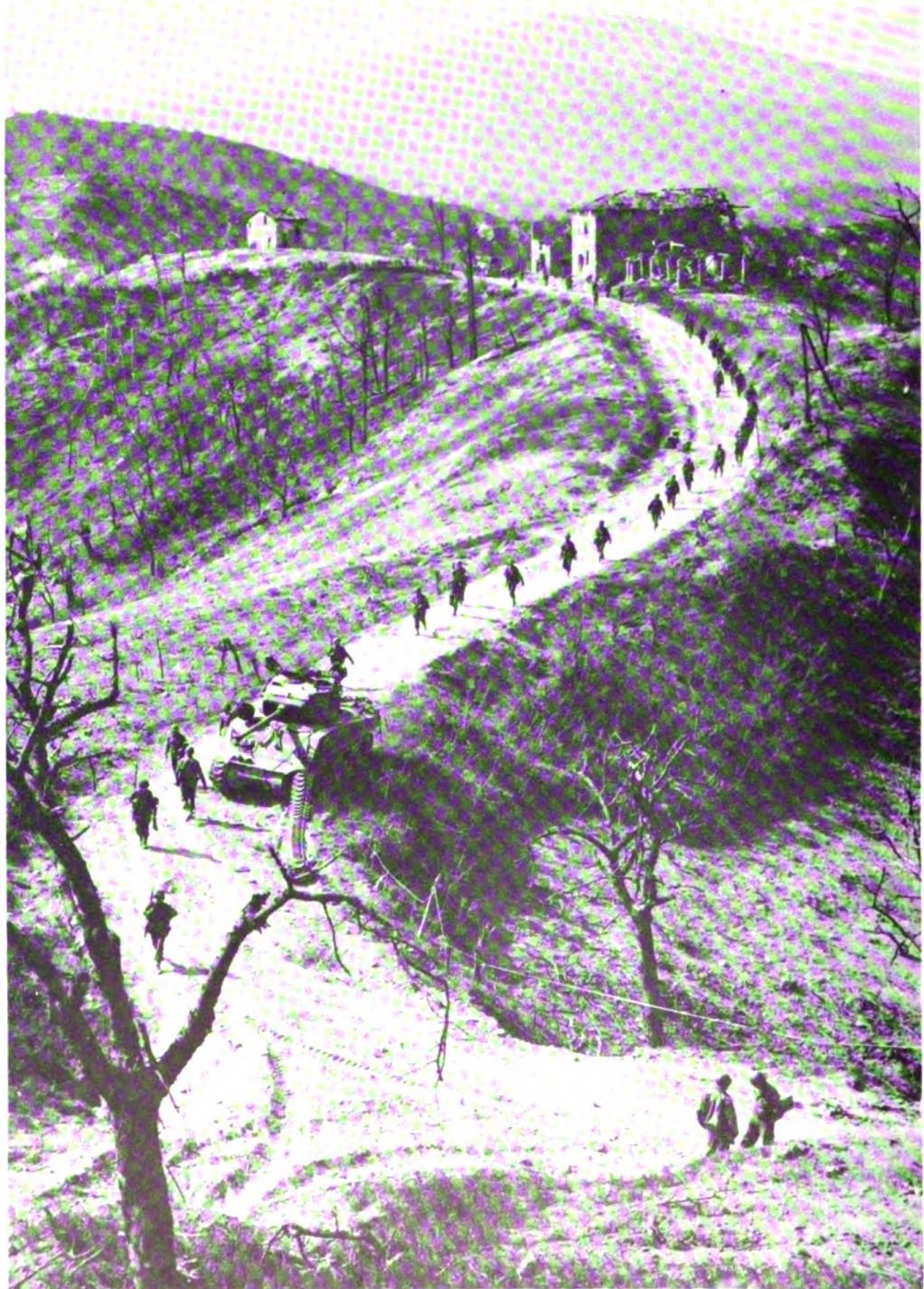
Dugout at Anzio (Sketch by Edward A. Reep)



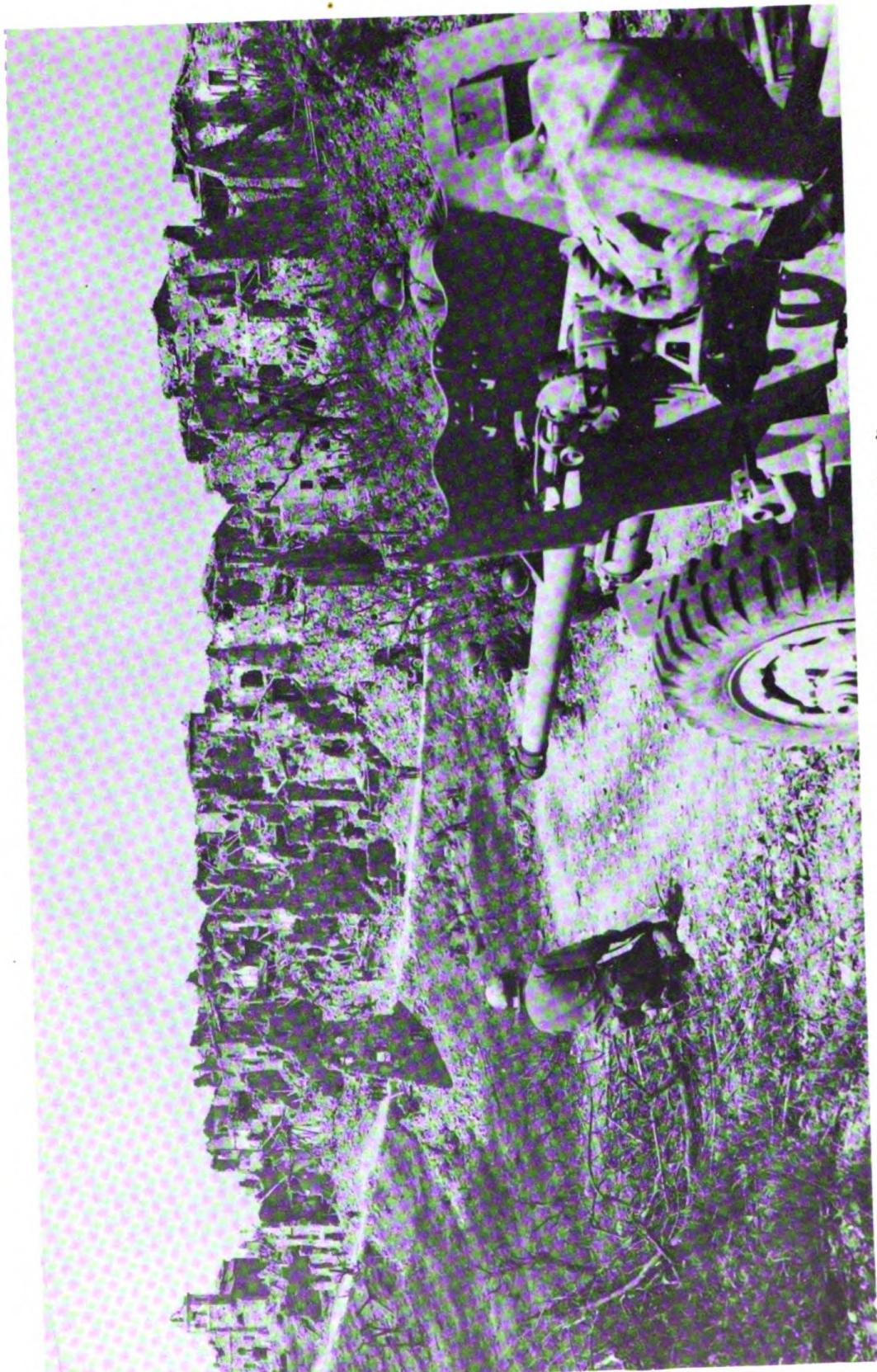
Civitavecchia (Sketch by Ludwig Mactarian)



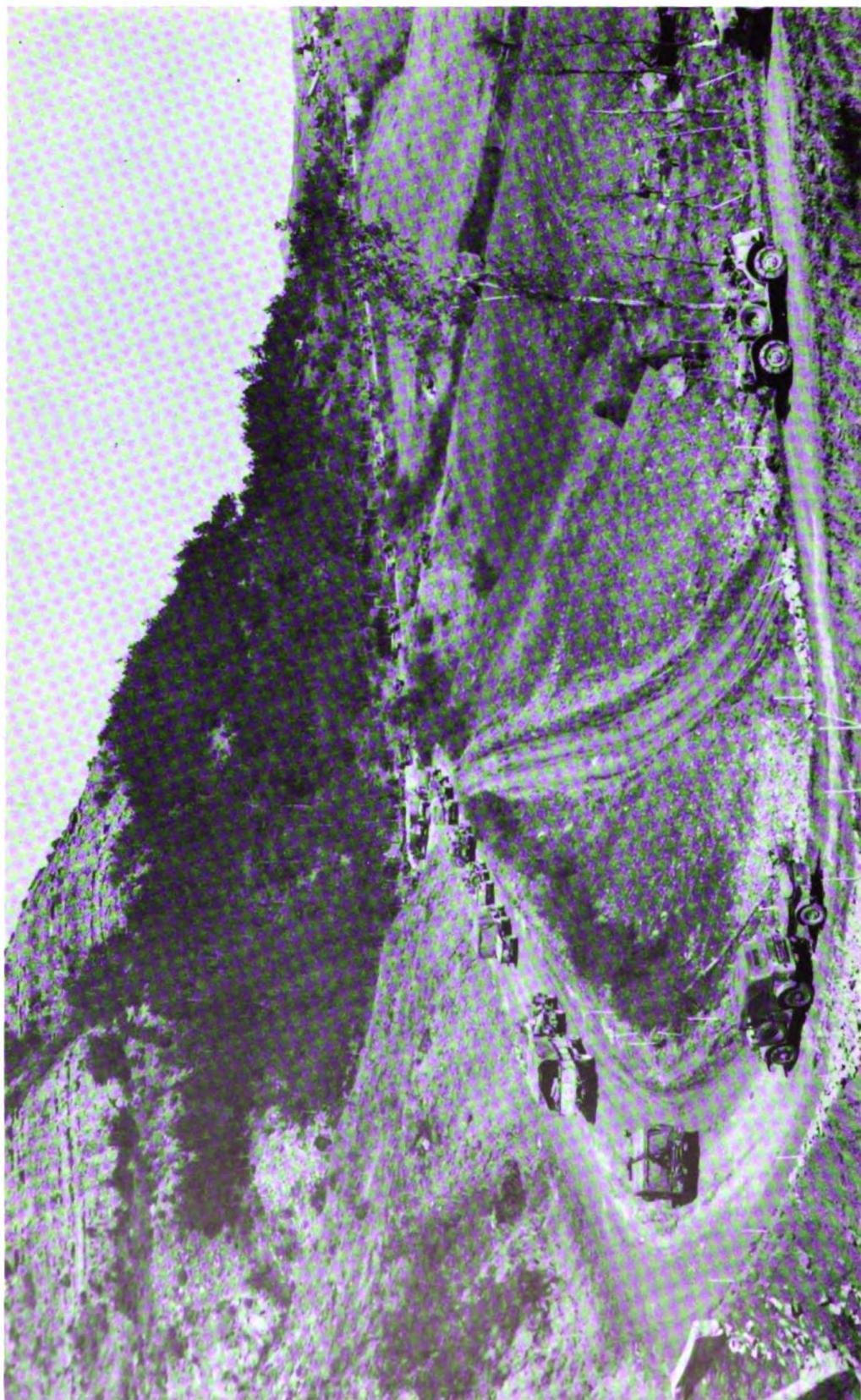
Anzio panorama (Sketch by Edward A. Reep)



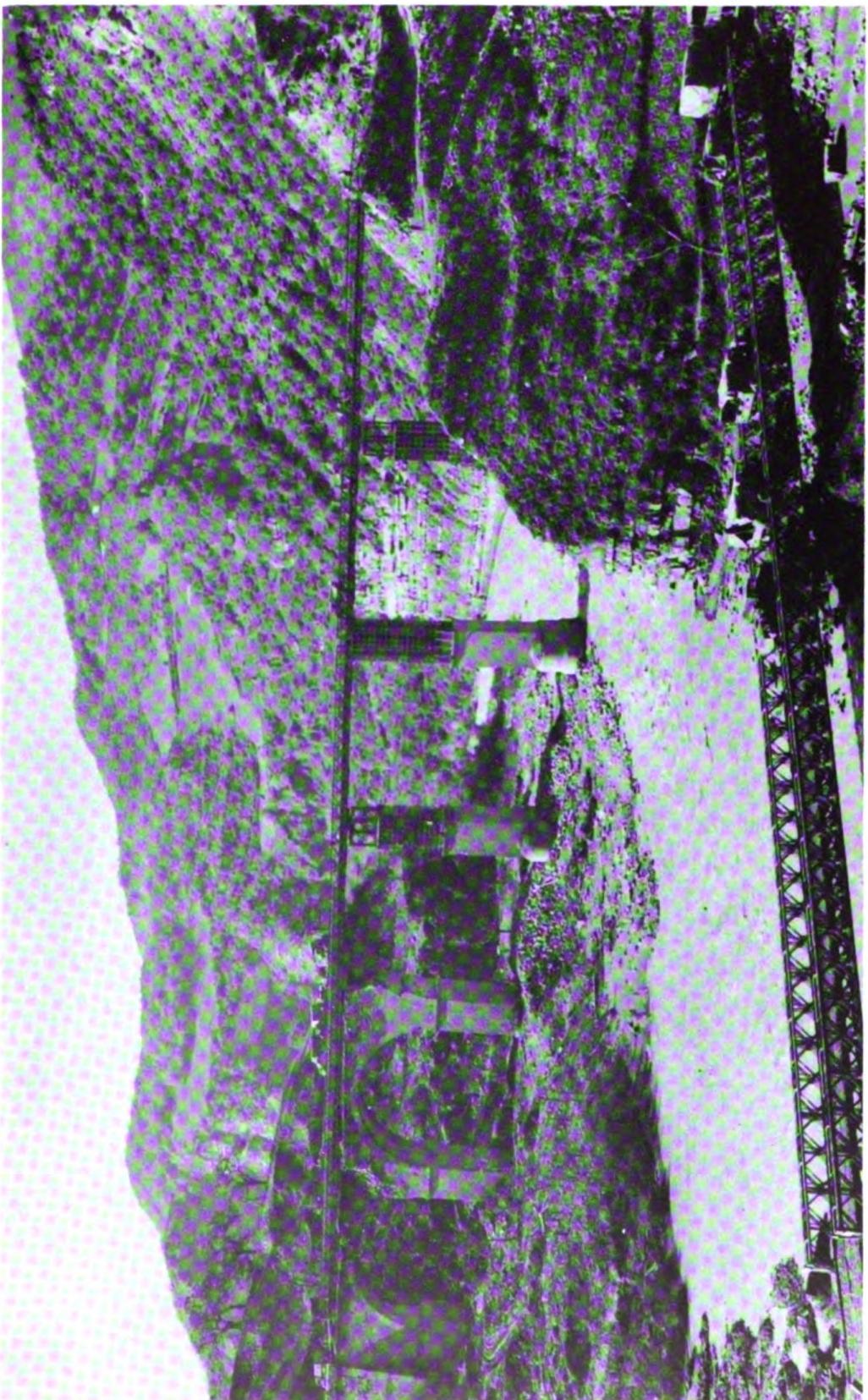
**Infantry advance past the wreckage of war**



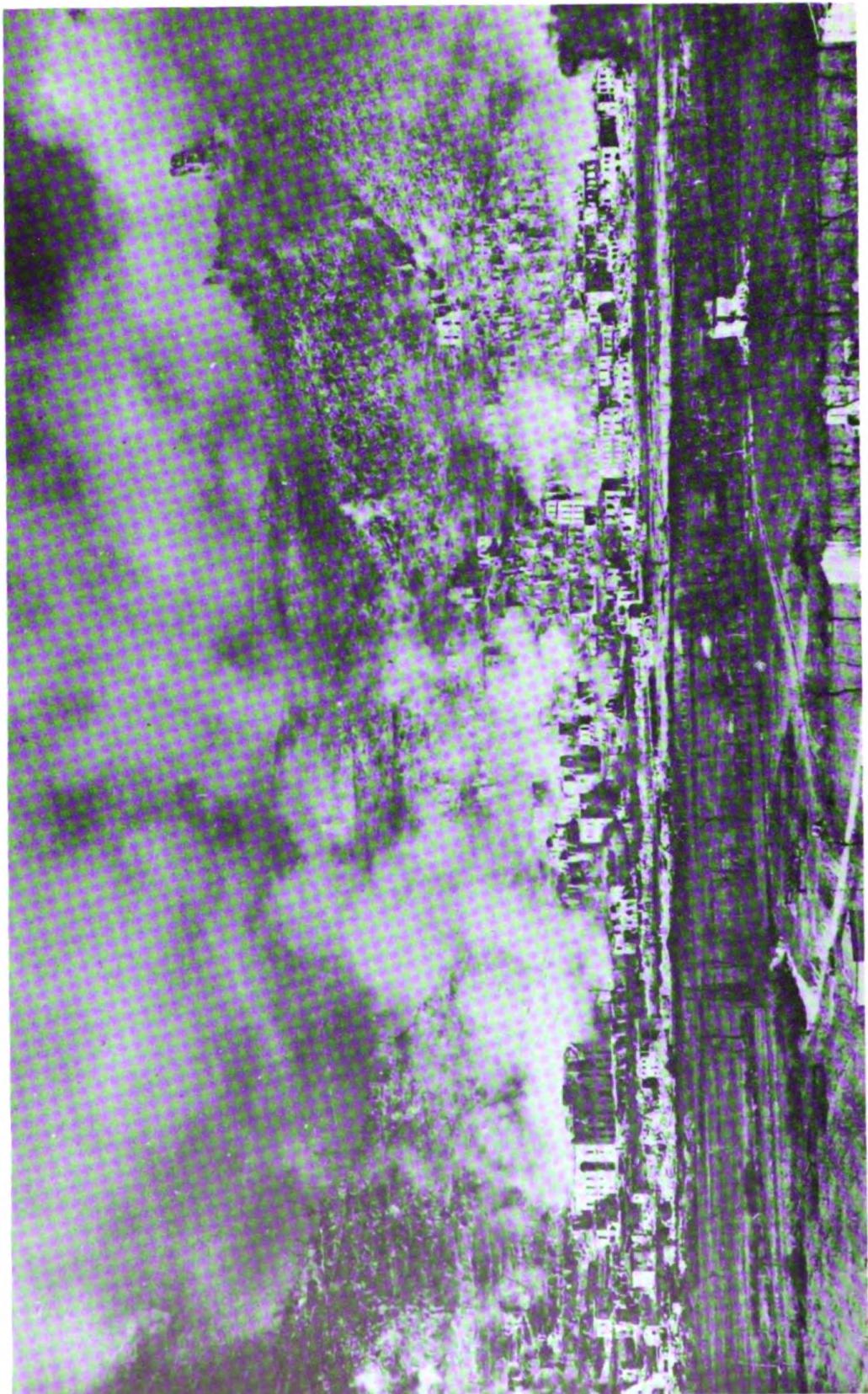
Santa María Ixtaltepec in ruins as the 351st Infantry enters it



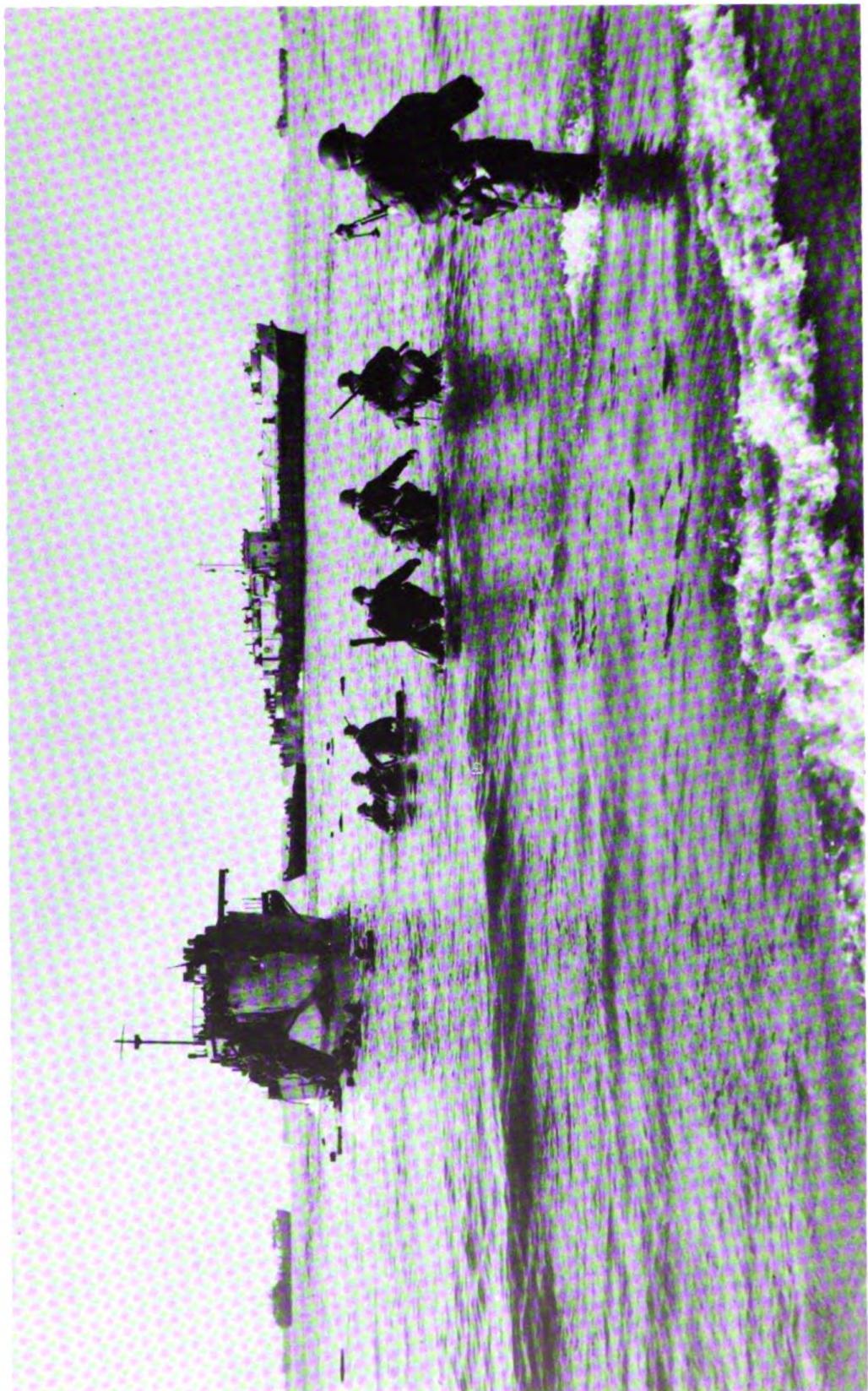
**Mount Altuzzo and the Firenzuola road, open to our advance**



Bailey bridges in the Santerno Valley (under 13 Corps control)



Bombing of Cassino, 15 March 1944



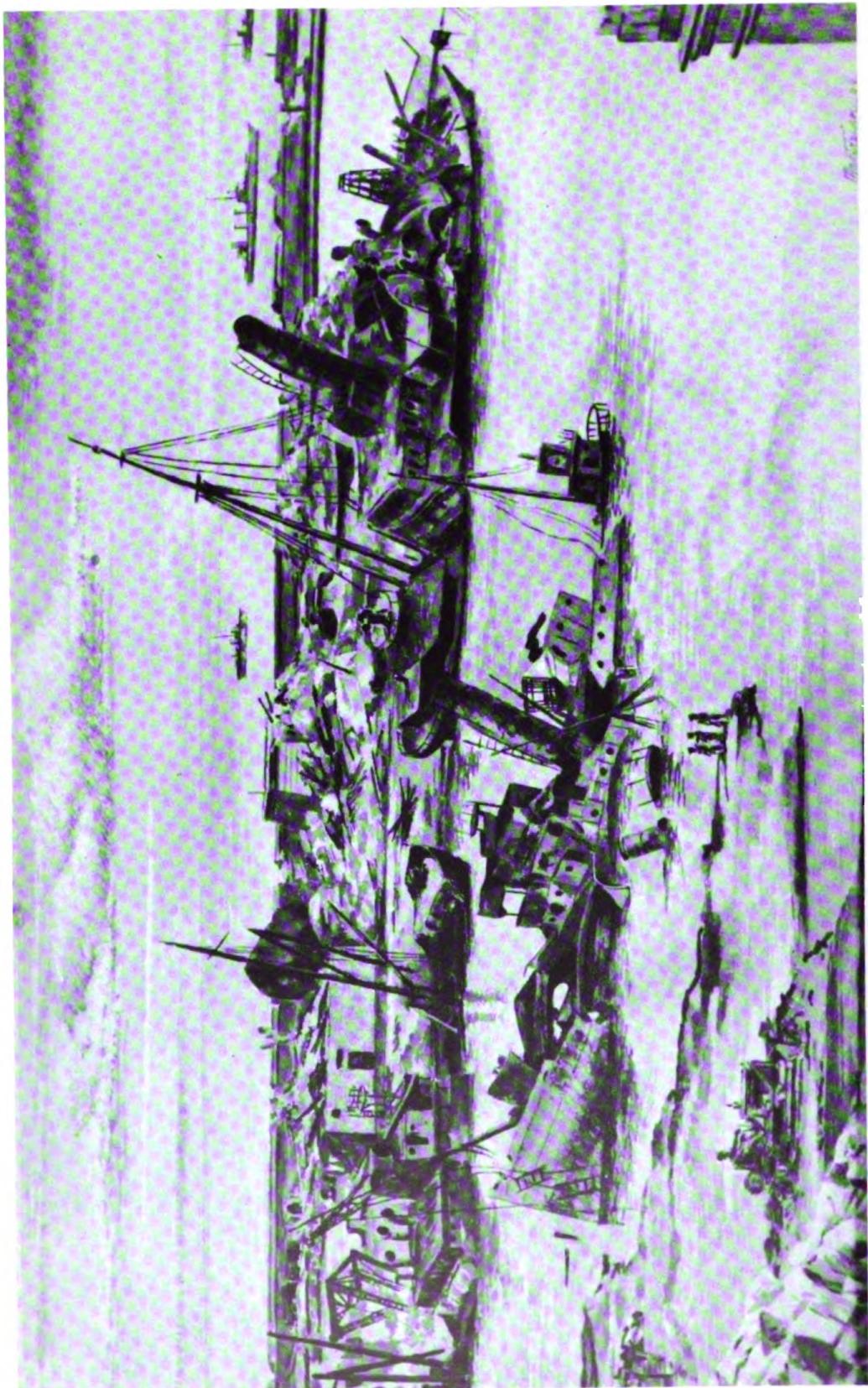
D-day at Anzio



Wounded at Anzio being evacuated to Naples by sea



Dugout at Anzio (Sketch by Edward A. Reep)



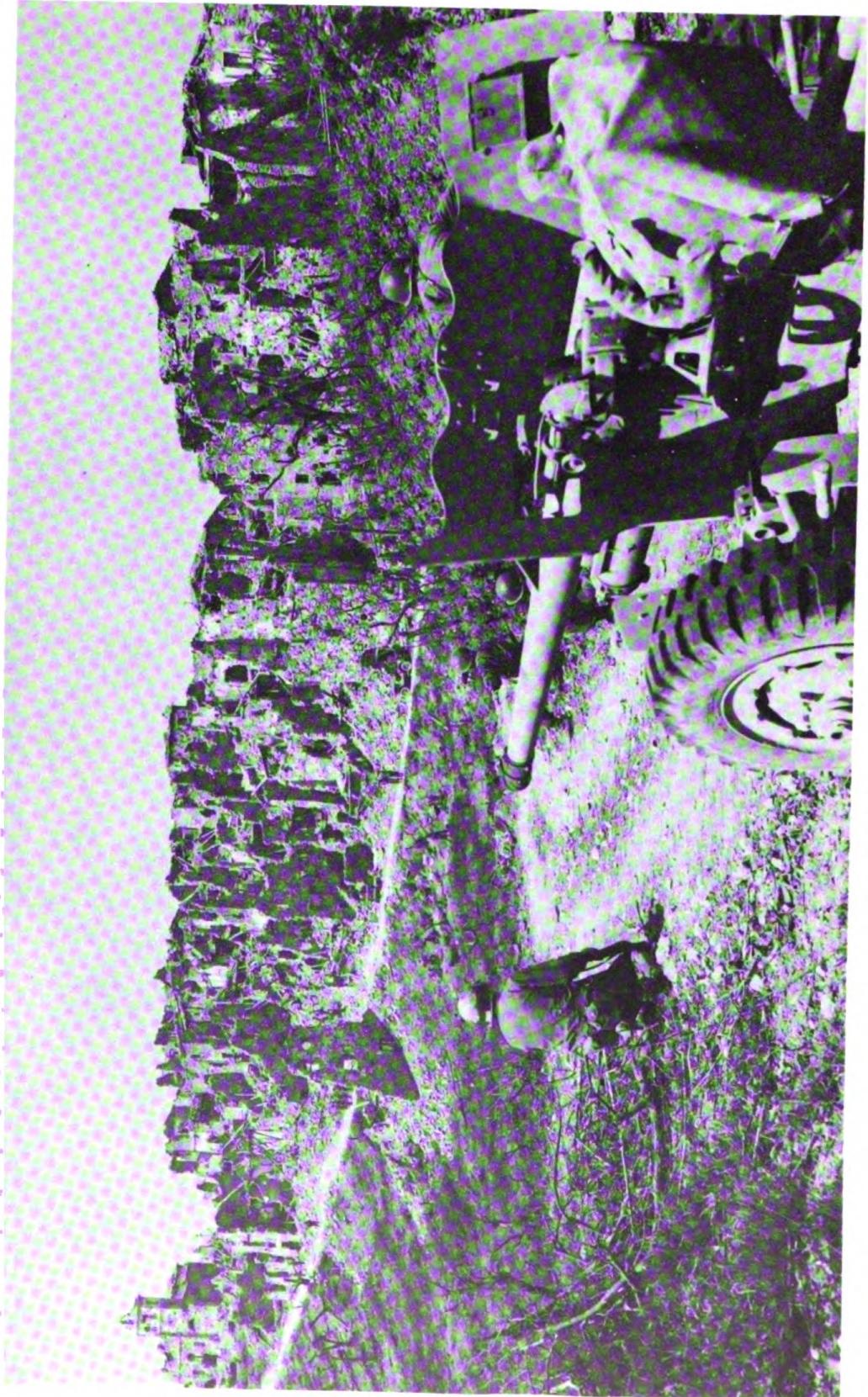
Civitavecchia (Sketch by Ludwig Mactarian)



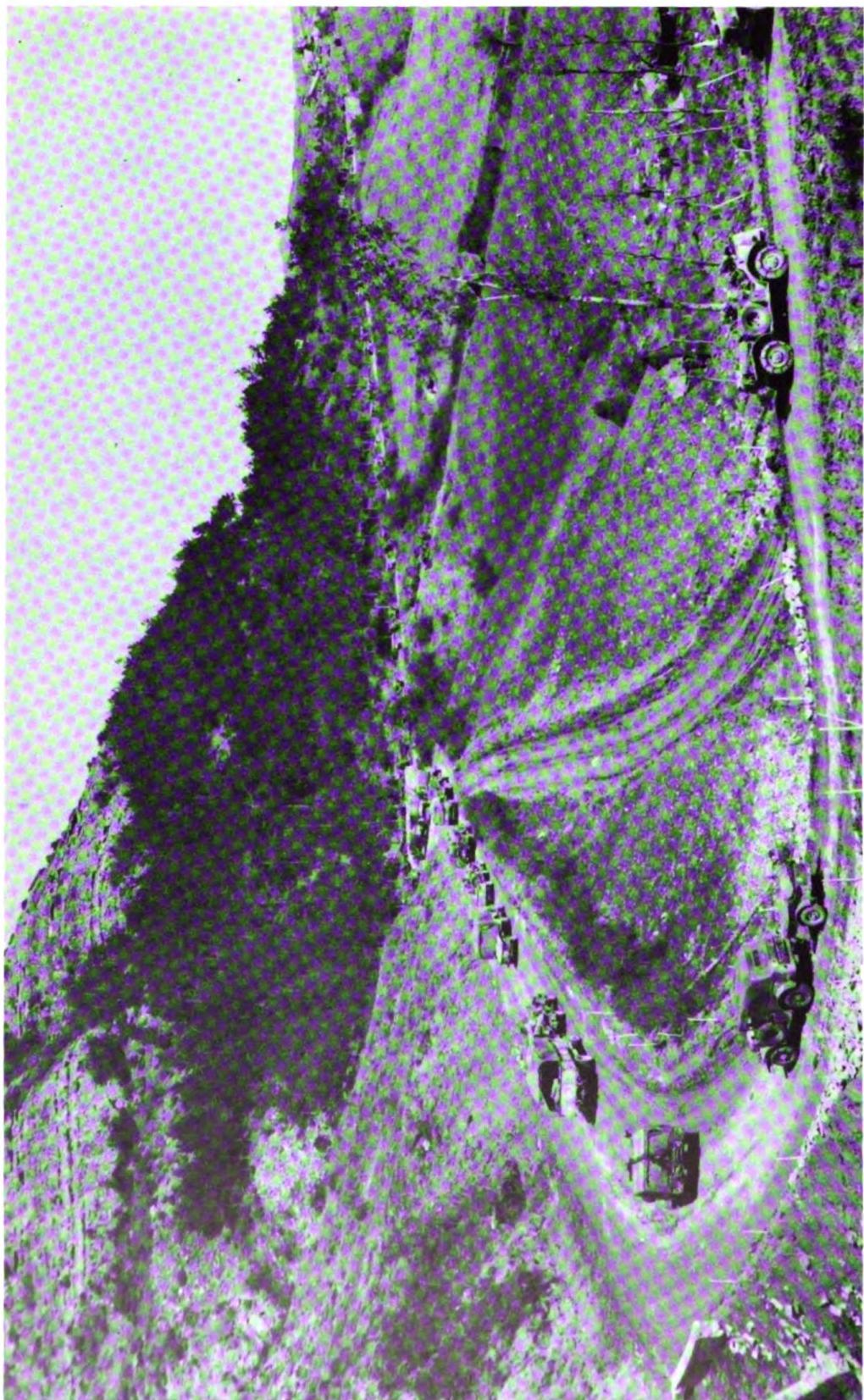
Anzio panorama (Sketch by Edward A. Reep)



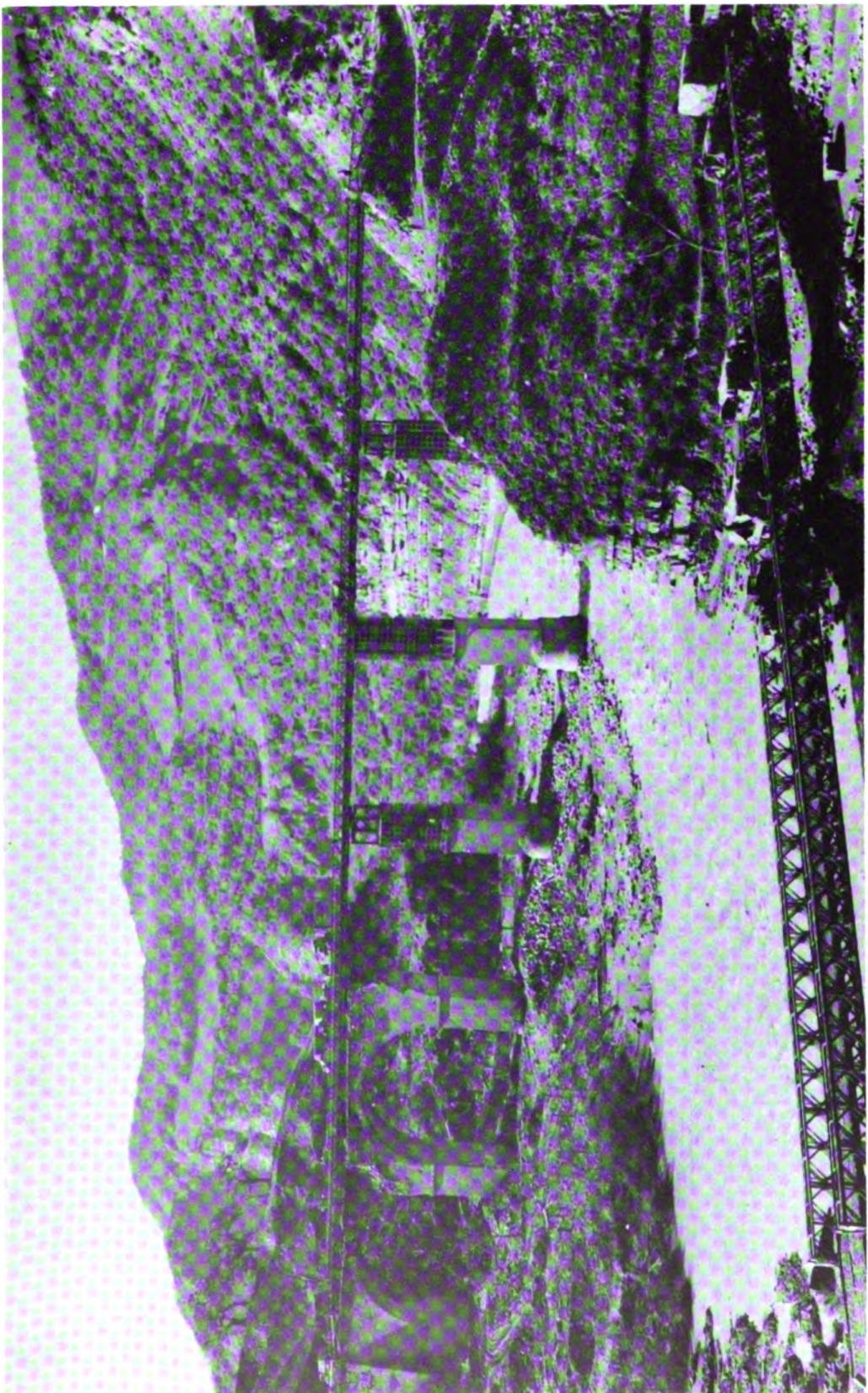
**Infantry advance past the wreckage of war**



Santa Maria Infantia in ruins as the 351st Infantry enters it



Mount Altuzzo and the Firenzuola road, open to our advance



Bailey bridges in the Santerno Valley (under 13 Corps control)



**At Velletri our tanks pass a dead German**



German prisoners in the Mount Adone area



Artillery on the 13 Corps front during the Gothic Line drive



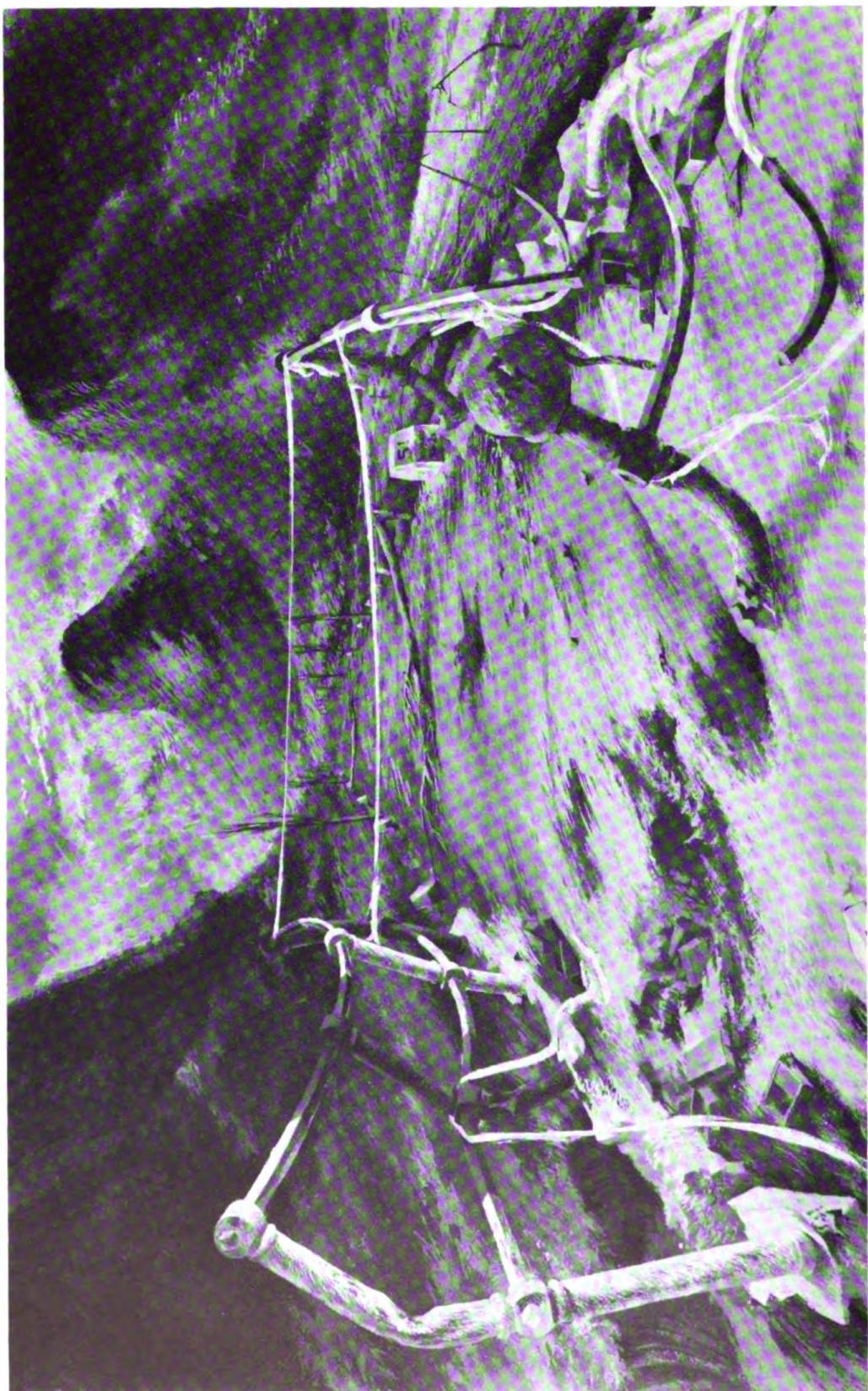
**Winter stalemate: A direct hit on an American truck at Loiano**



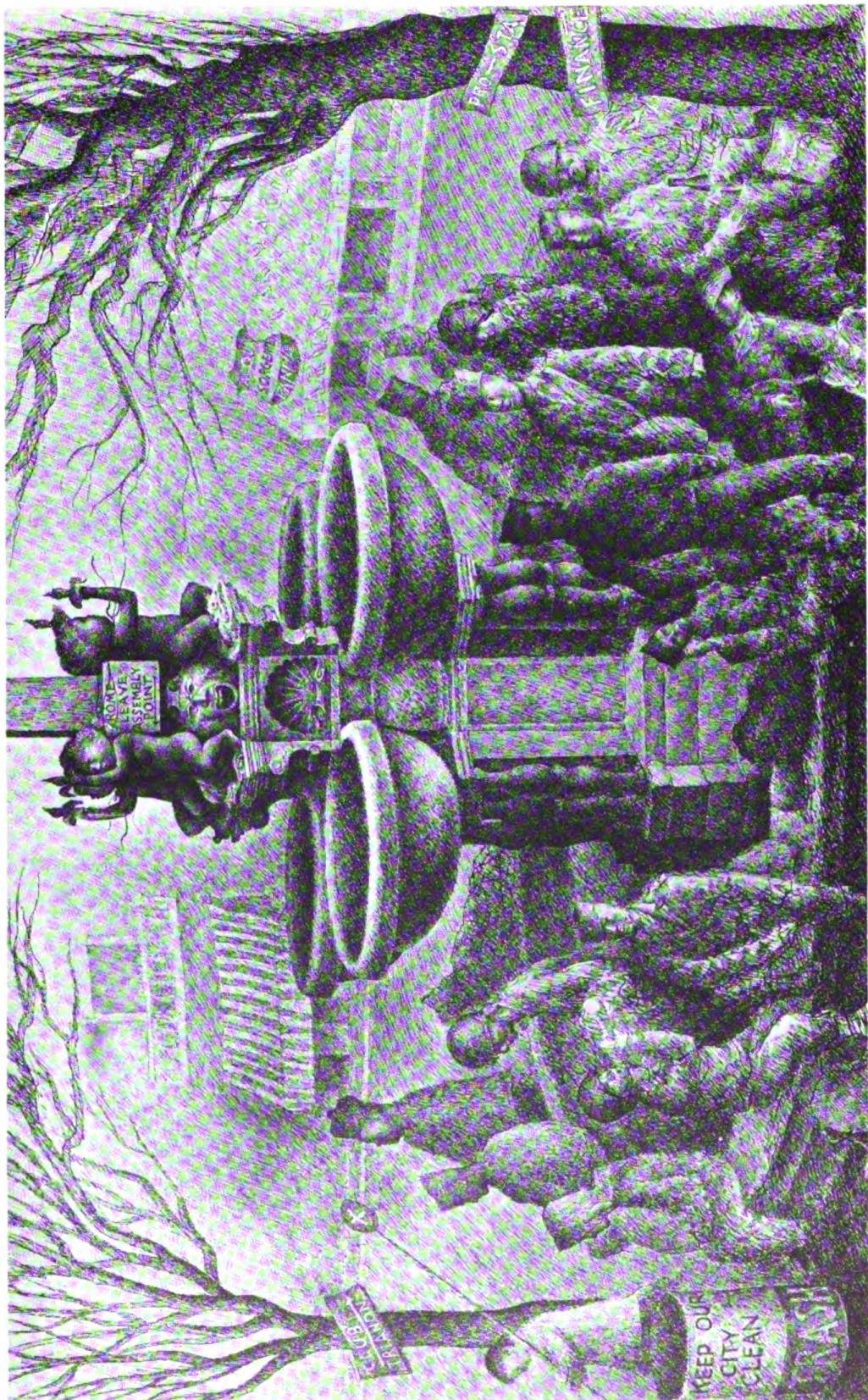
First-aid station in the Apennines at Christmas

Highway 65 and the Promised Land (Sketches by Edward A. Reep)





No Man's Land to Bologna (Sketch by Edward A. Reep)



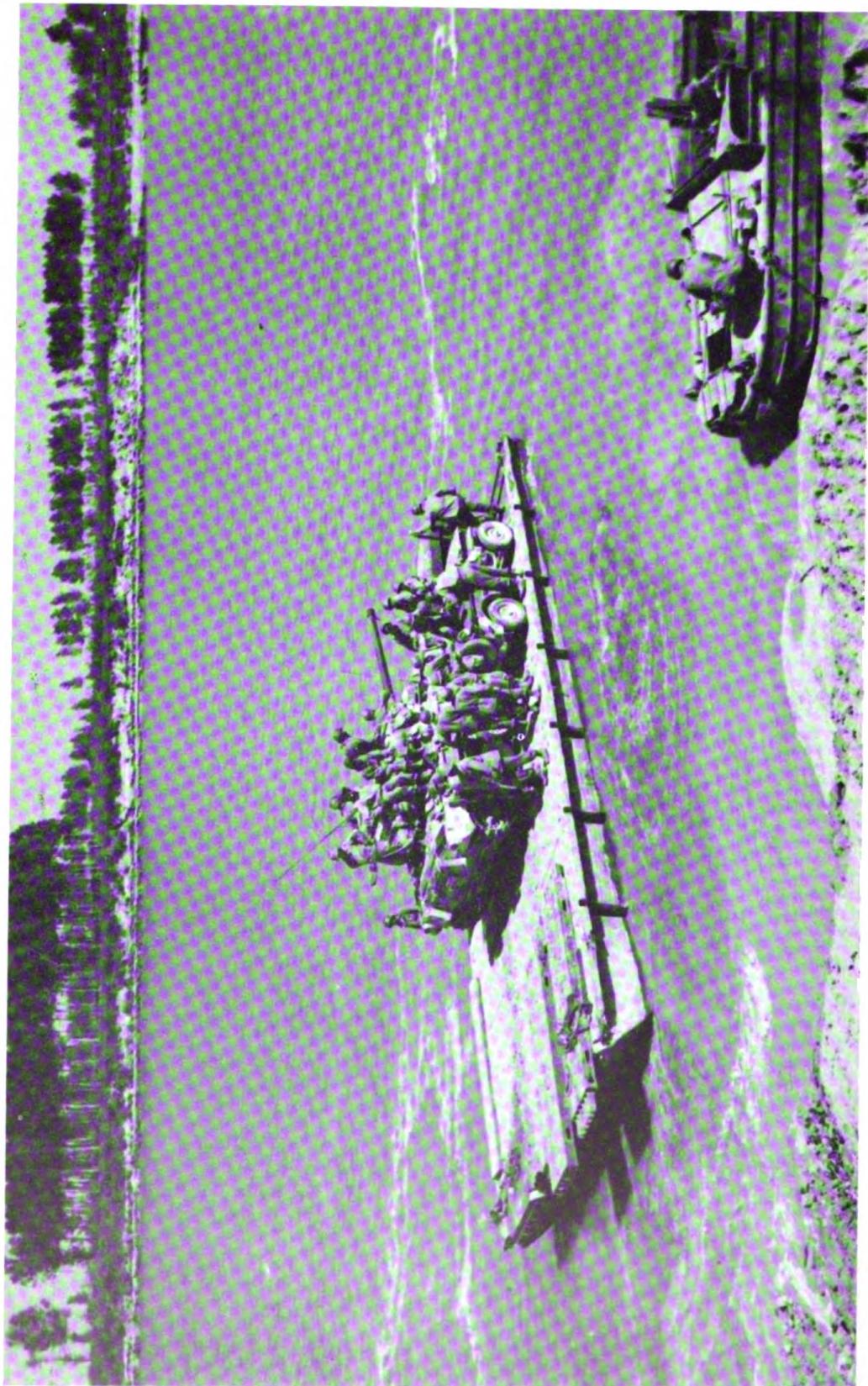
Rest in the winter (Sketch by Mitchell Siporin).



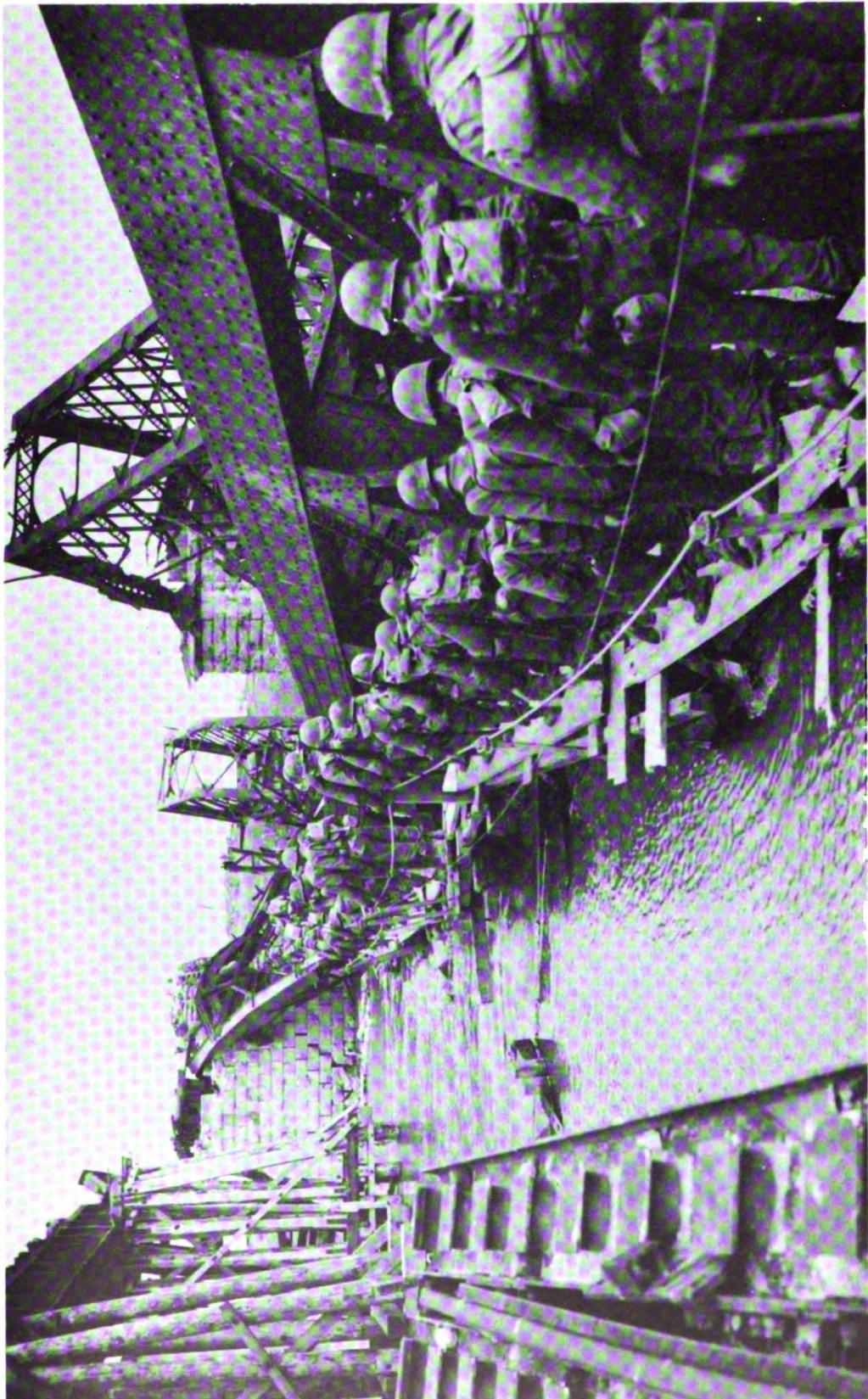
German prisoner (Sketch by Harry Davis).



**Advance near Montepastore during the breakout into the Po Valley**



Ferrying equipment across the Po during Fifth Army's last drive



The 91st Division crosses the Adige River at Legnago



p-47s near Mount Sole soften the way for the spring attack



**Mountains above Lake Garda, in the zone of the 10th Mountain Division**



Germans surrender as the war in Italy ends

was not yet certain, and there was even a possibility that the Germans might at any time decide to withdraw from Italy entirely. Many believed that the war in Europe was nearly over and that this might be the last attack of Fifth Army. In any case the months of August and September were critical ones for the German High Command. The Allied armies in France were driving hard for the Rhine, and the Germans were faced with the necessity of making broad strategic plans for the defense of Germany. The effect of these decisions on the Italian campaign could not yet be predicted.

Of more immediate effect on Fifth Army's planning was the fact that in the attack on the Gothic Line the main blow was planned to be delivered by Eighth Army on the right along the Adriatic coast. Then, when German reserves were fully committed, Fifth Army would drive north from Florence in a two-phase attack. In the first phase II Corps would attack through the left half of the 13 Corps zone north of Florence and capture the hill line some eight miles to the north of the city, aided by 13 Corps on the right. Thereafter II Corps would push across the Sieve Valley and up Highway 65, with 13 Corps following the axis of the Borgo San Lorenzo-Imola road to the east (Highway 6521). IV Corps on the left would simulate a crossing of the Arno and would be prepared to follow up any withdrawal. Since D-day for the Fifth Army attack could not be set until the Eighth Army drive had made good progress, the timing of these attacks remained indefinite until the very last minute. If Fifth Army attacked too soon, the attack might prove abortive; if too late, the plan for trapping the enemy might fail to achieve maximum results.

The Eighth Army attack, however, appeared to be very successful during its first two weeks. On 24 August 1 Canadian Corps and 5 Corps came into the line on the left of 2 Polish Corps on the Adriatic, and on the night of 25-26 August the attack of all three corps pushed across the Metauro River. (*See Map 37.*) By the 29th General McCreery's troops were on the south bank of the Foglia River, facing the main positions of the Gothic Line. The thrust against this line began on the 30th; by 2 September our troops were through it, and pushed on to the ridge running northeast through San Savino and Coriano to Riccione, six miles below Rimini. Here the enemy elected to hold, and the weather, fair all through the first days of Sep-

tember, came to the aid of the Germans. A two-day rain beginning 6 September flooded the numerous streams and washed out the temporary bridges on the inland routes, forcing a brief halt in the attack.

Nevertheless Eighth Army had broken the Gothic Line defenses, and a single ridge remained to be taken before Rimini and Highway 9 to Bologna would be open before it. Although bad weather and Marshal Kesselring's swift concentration of reserves to strengthen his threatened flank had reduced the possibilities of a quick exploitation into the Po Valley, the broad pattern of strategy laid down by General Alexander was working according to plan. Already in August the 26th Panzer Grenadier Division had left the Fifth Army front and appeared on the Adriatic, and the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division began moving in the first days of September. By the end of the first week in September the 356th Grenadier Division was also in the process of moving. Except for two weak divisions, the 162d Grenadier Division re-forming in the Ravenna area and the 20th GAF Field Division near Viareggio, the Germans had no reserves left south of the Po River. With the shift of three good divisions to the British Eighth Army front and the commitment of all the enemy's available reserves, the opportune moment was at hand for Fifth Army to launch its attack.

## 2. APPROACHING THE GOTHIC LINE

1-12 September 1944

During early September Fifth Army had considerable difficulty in keeping in contact with the enemy's main forces. Twice during the period of the Eighth Army attack the enemy made voluntary withdrawals on our front north of Florence and so upset all our schedules of assembly areas, artillery positions, and initial fires. The first of these withdrawals came at the end of August and was the direct result of the Eighth Army attack, which forced the transfer of both enemy reserves and front-line troops from the Fifth Army front to the Adriatic. Any plans the enemy may have entertained of fighting a slow delaying action from the Arno to the Gothic Line were abandoned; rather than risk the danger of having troops along the Arno cut off by a Fifth Army attack, the Germans began to pull back on 31 August. Army orders went out immediately to follow up the

enemy, and on 1 September IV Corps and 13 Corps moved forward. II Corps remained in reserve except for the 442d Infantry in the narrow zone immediately west of Florence.<sup>1</sup>

On the left IV Corps crossed the Arno on a broad front on the 1st and pushed across the plain with practically no opposition. Italian partisans to our front could not understand the leisurely pace at which our troops advanced, but IV Corps was operating under orders not to jeopardize the element of surprise hoped for in the main Fifth Army attack north of Florence. On the 5th General Crittenberger ordered a general regrouping along the line Serchio River-Mt. Pisano-Altopascio-Mt. Albano, with plans for further advance dependent upon Army order. 13 Corps on the right was already across the Arno from Florence to Pontassieve, and took advantage of the enemy withdrawal to climb north into the hills above Florence. By the 3d advance elements were on the lower slopes of the hills barring the way to the Sieve Valley; here the 4th Parachute Division seemed inclined to hold for the time being. Fifth Army now had a line five to ten miles north of the river to serve as an assembly area for the troops in the main attack.

Before the end of August General Keyes of II Corps had concentrated four divisions for the attack, plans had been completed, and the artillery had begun to move into position areas south of Florence. Then came the first German withdrawal. By new orders from Fifth Army, issued on 4 September, II Corps assumed command of the rear areas of 13 Corps in its intended zone of attack, and on the nights of 4-5 September secretly moved the 34th and 91st Divisions and corps artillery north of Florence. At 0001, 6 September, II Corps assumed command of its initial attack zone, thereby placing the 1 Division and elements of the 8 Indian Division temporarily under its operational control. By the 7th II Corps had completed the assembly of its leading elements north of the Arno and was prepared to pass them through the British troops screening the corps front.

Smooth development of the II Corps attack was hindered both by the weather and by a second enemy withdrawal. Swelled by rains, the Arno reached the flood stage on the 7th, rendering all fords useless and washing out most of the floating bridges as far west as Pontedera. Fortunately two high-level, two-way Bailey bridges had been completed within Florence and so assured communications with our bases of supply, which shifted to Leghorn

after the opening of that port on 26 August. More serious was the enemy withdrawal which began on the night of 5-6 September. Without a battle the Germans yielded the line of hills just south of the Sieve, capture of which had formed the first phase of our planned attack, and pulled back to the Gothic Line positions, thereby placing their troops well beyond the range of both division and corps artillery and necessitating the movement of all attack elements to new forward areas. These shifts were carried out on the 9th, the 91st and 34th Divisions advancing into the line and the 1 Division moving to the east out of the II Corps zone. At noon on the 9th General Clark ordered the beginning of the operations in the second phase of our attack; among other details the boundary between II and 13 Corps was shifted to a line midway between Highways 65 and 6521 as far as the Sieve and then continuing northeast approximately two miles east of Highway 6524, the Firenzuola road.

The plan of attack had been appreciably changed by the orders of 4 September. On 17 August II Corps was directed to attack along Highway 65, the Florence-Bologna axis; in this attack it would have been forced to assault the powerful Futa Pass defenses. Now II Corps was to make its main effort along the axis Florence-Firenzuola while 13 Corps was to concentrate its attack along the axis Borgo San Lorenzo-Faenza, initially assisting II Corps by putting the emphasis on the left flank of the corps zone. Under the new plan II Corps was to breach the Gothic Line at Il Giogo Pass, seven miles to the southeast of Futa Pass, and drive on toward Firenzuola, thereby outflanking the Futa Pass defenses. Once through the Gothic Line, it was hoped that the momentum of the Fifth Army offensive would carry it through the mountains and into the Po Valley, where the over-all Allied strategy called for an encircling movement to trap the enemy forces south of the Po River. To provide for this possibility II Corps was ordered to prepare plans for the employment of a strong mobile force to exploit northwest of Bologna with the possible use of the 1st Armored Division.

To secure the hills south of the Sieve II Corps planned to use the 91st and 34th Divisions; then, for the attack on the Gothic Line, the 85th Division was to be introduced on the right to make the main effort on a narrow front in the vicinity of Il Giogo Pass. Once the Gothic Line was broken at Il Giogo Pass, it could be anticipated that the enemy would be forced to with-

draw from his Futa Pass positions, so the 91st, 34th, and 85th Divisions were to converge rapidly on Radicosa Pass on Highway 65 eight miles north of Futa Pass. The 88th Division would be prepared on corps order to pass through the 91st Division along Highway 65 or through the 85th Division along the Firenzuola-Castel del Rio-Castel San Pietro road. Optimism ran high, and all divisions were ordered to be ready to exploit within their zones toward the Po Valley. For the difficult task of supplying its troops through the mountains II Corps had available nine Italian pack-mule companies, each containing 260 mules.

D-day for the main attack of Fifth Army finally proved to be 10 September. Since the immediate task was to occupy the ground vacated by the withdrawing enemy and to gain contact, there was no need to arrange for preliminary artillery support, and II and 13 Corps were each given authority to initiate movement without regard to the other. On the II Corps front the 34th and 91st Divisions advanced on either side of Highway 65, the former on the left.

Opposition before the 34th Division under General Bolte was initially slight, then stiffened; and by the night of the 12th the advance had been reduced from gains of miles to hundreds of yards as the combination of continuously rising ground, mine-fields, and increasing enemy resistance slowed the attacking troops. On the left the 133d Infantry under Colonel Schildroth was by the 12th north of La Dogana Hill with the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron patrolling up Highway 6620 on the west; the 168th Infantry under Colonel Hine had taken Barberino but was stopped below Mt. Frassino. In the night it was relieved by the 135th Infantry under Colonel Manhart. The division had reached the outer defenses of the Gothic Line, and the elements of the 334th Grenadier and 4th Parachute Divisions holding the sector of the line between Highways 65 and 6620 showed increasing reluctance to give ground.

On the right the 91st Division under General Livesay reached the south bank of the Sieve on the afternoon of the 10th. Five miles to the north across the gently rolling fields of the Sieve Valley loomed a massive wall of mountains shrouded in the blue haze of the early autumn afternoon. Hidden somewhere in this maze of lofty, jumbled hills lay the enemy's prepared defenses and the bulk of his troops. Our columns, less interested in the impressive scenery than in the immediate task at hand, paused

only to complete their preparations to force a crossing of the river below them. Opposition was slight, and before dawn on the 11th the division was over the river; by dusk it was entering the foothills of the mountains. Enemy small-arms, mortar, and artillery fire now increased, but the 91st Division attacked again early on the 12th, with the ambitious objective of taking Mt. Calvi and both Mt. Monticelli and Mt. Altuzzo, the two hills dominating Il Giogo Pass. (*See Map 32.*) These heights were all strongpoints in the Gothic Line defenses, and the day's advance brought our leading elements only to the German outpost positions. Additional support was necessary for further progress.

To the right and left of II Corps the rest of Fifth Army had likewise followed up the enemy withdrawal. The advance of 13 Corps across the Sieve showed virtually the same pattern as that of II Corps—at first rapid, and then slower gains. Although the center and right flank of 13 Corps lagged behind, the 1 Division under General Loewen on the left flank astride Highway 6521 was by the 12th in position to carry out the corps primary mission of supporting the II Corps attack on Il Giogo Pass. On the left IV Corps patrolled on 6-9 September while the main attack elements were moving into position; then on 10-12 September it also began the laborious task of surmounting the mountain barrier.

Throughout, the action of IV Corps was to remain secondary to and conditioned by the main Army effort on the right. Advances were made only when the enemy elected to withdraw or when it was necessary to apply pressure to simulate an attack and discourage him from transferring units to the more critical area. The enemy, for his part, made no serious effort to hold the Arno Valley or the forward slopes of the Northern Apennines. It appeared that he was carrying out his withdrawal in accordance with a predetermined timetable, occasionally offering resistance but frequently giving up good defensive positions without a fight. Since the enemy timetable was generally ahead of that prescribed for IV Corps contact was almost entirely limited to patrol clashes. By the 12th Task Force 45 was in the near vicinity of Viareggio; the 1st Armored Division under General Prichard covered a 20-mile front east from the Serchio; and on the right the 6 South African Armoured Division under General Poole moved into the hills north of Pistoia on an equally broad front.

On 12 September Florence and the Arno River lay almost 20 miles behind the forward troops of II and 13 Corps, and IV Corps held the whole of the broad Arno plain as well as the first line of hills overlooking it from the north. Our plans and training for a river crossing and then the seizure of the hills immediately north of the river had proved almost unnecessary. Indeed, the unwillingness of the enemy to hold fast long enough for Fifth Army to strike a real blow was becoming a problem in itself. Only at the end of the period, when our advance elements approached the Gothic Line itself, did resistance increase.

### 3. THE BREAKTHROUGH AT IL GIOGO PASS

13-22 September 1944

Dawn of 13 September found Fifth Army ready to enter the critical phase of its carefully planned offensive to reach the Po Valley. Although it was not yet certain that the enemy intended to call a halt to the brief delaying actions and successive withdrawals which had marked his retreat north of the Arno River, the troops of II Corps who were to spearhead the Army thrust were now up against the main defenses of the Gothic Line and were ready to attack.

The enemy actually intended to defend the Line, but was ill prepared to meet our powerful drive. In mid-August Marshal Kesselring had had five divisions in the central sector north of Florence—from west to east the 26th Panzer, 29th Panzer Grenadier, 4th Parachute, 356th Grenadier, and 715th Grenadier Divisions—but by 10 September three of these had been moved to the Adriatic coast. The gap on the west left by the removal first of the 26th Panzer Division and then of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division was partly filled by moving the 334th Grenadier Division into the portion of the Gothic Line astride Highway 6620, but there was no unit available to replace the 356th Grenadier Division when it left at the end of the first week in September. To fill the resulting gap on the east the 4th Parachute and 715th Grenadier Divisions were forced to extend their already long fronts. The 4th Parachute Division alone was responsible for most of the II Corps attack zone, and although over 600 replacements had arrived shortly before the II Corps offensive was launched the division was spread thin with no available reserves. All three of its regiments were in the line: the 10th Parachute

Regiment in the Mt. Frassino area, the 11th Parachute Regiment in the Mt. Calvi area, and the 12th Parachute Regiment in the Mt. Altuzzo area. Additional complications arose from the fact that the boundary between the 4th Parachute and 715th Grenadier Divisions east of Mt. Verruca was also the boundary between the German Fourteenth and Tenth Armies, leaving the enemy with a divided command in the sector where II Corps planned to strike its main blow.

In contrast to the relative weakness of the enemy forces holding the Gothic Line, after the introduction of the 85th Division under General Coulter on the 13th, II Corps had three infantry divisions committed and a fourth in reserve. All three of the attacking divisions were heavily reinforced, for to concentrate his forces on the Il Giogo Pass positions General Keyes eventually amassed there approximately 50 percent of his committed infantry strength and an equal proportion of his pool of tank, tank destroyer, and chemical mortar units, giving him a clear superiority of at least three to one to the defending enemy forces.

In addition to normal division artillery each of the attacking divisions received direct support from one corps field artillery group. Air bombardment also played an important part in the breaking of the Gothic Line. Preliminary bombing was limited to conceal the point of our attack, but after the commitment of II Corps the air effort increased sharply. Medium bombers concentrated on the passes on the 11th and the next day loosed all their bombs on Firenzuola, the supply and communications center for enemy troops in the Il Giogo Pass area. During the next two days the air offensive continued with full force; then poor visibility and bad weather slowly cut down the sorties until the 20th, when all planes were grounded. In the seven days 13-19 September 1,333 fighter-bomber and 552 medium bomber sorties had been flown. Although the total number of sorties was not unusually large for a major ground operation, the concentration of the majority of the missions on the Futa Pass and Il Giogo Pass-Firenzuola areas provided excellent support for the II Corps attack. Much of our air support, together with XII Tactical Air Command, had been transferred to France in August; on 20 September a new air headquarters, XXII Tactical Air Command, assumed control of coordinating air activities in support of Fifth Army.

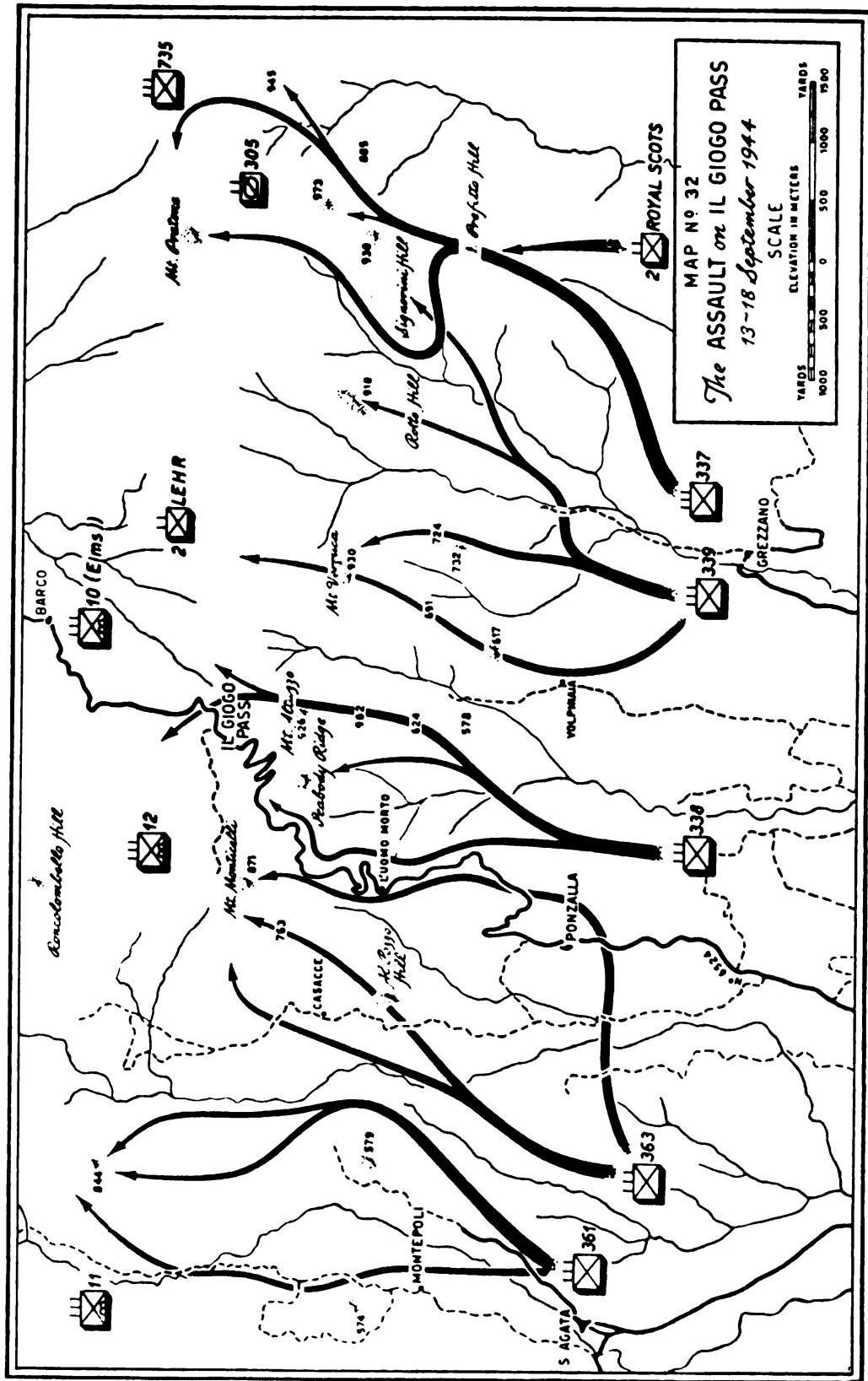
The concentration of air, artillery, and infantry on Il Giogo Pass was in accordance with the Army plan of making the break

in the Gothic Line at that spot, difficult though the terrain was. (*See Map 32.*) The pass itself is nothing but a way through a ridge 900 meters high separating the valleys of the Sieve on the south and the Santerno on the north. The 85th Division, attacking on the east side of the pass, was faced with four prominent peaks: Mt. Altuzzo, Mt. Verruca, Hill 918, and Signorini Hill, arrayed shoulder to shoulder from west to east. Due to the eroding effect of mountain streams draining south to the Sieve Valley the southern slopes of these hills have been broken up into a series of roughly parallel ridges and deep gullies. The narrow, knife-edged ridges are covered with stunted brush and scattered patches of pines except where bare rock outcroppings and sheer cliffs furnish no foothold for vegetation. There are few trees on the forward slopes of Mt. Altuzzo, but parts of Mt. Verruca are heavily wooded with pines and chestnuts.

West of Il Giogo Pass, where the 91st Division was to make its main effort, the terrain forms a huge amphitheater with two wings extending south from the main east-west divide. Mt. Calvi, a smooth, dome-shaped hill, forms the end of the west wing, and Mt. Monticelli, the key objective west of the pass, forms the tip of the east wing. The rough floor of the amphitheater is divided by a secondary ascending ridge running north from the village of Sant' Agata to the main divide. The same confusion of brush-clad ridges and gullies which characterizes the approaches to the heights east of the pass is true of those on the west, although the upper slopes of Mt. Monticelli are more even and are almost devoid of cover.

Other than Highway 6524 no road crosses the divide, and only narrow trails penetrate beyond the lower slopes of the mountains. To open the highway it would first be necessary to capture Mt. Altuzzo and Mt. Monticelli, the two heights dominating Il Giogo Pass. These two objectives were in turn subject to observation and crossfire from the adjoining heights. If the enemy made good use of the mountains and his prepared defenses, only a coordinated attack against the heights on both sides of the road could achieve success.

During 12 September the 363d Infantry under Colonel Magill, advancing astride Highway 6524, had reached the approaches to both Mt. Monticelli and Mt. Altuzzo. Small-arms fire from enemy outposts and increasing mortar and artillery fire had slowed and then halted the leading companies, but the division, still hope-



ful that the two mountains could be mastered before the 85th Division took over the zone to the east of the highway, launched an attack on the night of 12-13 September. The 1st Battalion, 363d Infantry, reached the vicinity of the hamlet of Casacce in its push toward the southwestern slopes of Mt. Monticelli; the 3d Battalion moved beyond the village of L' Uomo Morto toward the southeastern slopes of the same mountain, but a counterattack at daylight forced it back to the shelter of the houses in the village. One company of the battalion, sent toward Mt. Altuzzo, lost its way but finally wound up below Hill 624 on the Altuzzo ridge. At 0600, 13 September, when a general corps attack was scheduled to start, neither Mt. Monticelli nor Mt. Altuzzo had been taken, and the 363d Infantry had only confused reports as to the location of its forward units.

The 363d Infantry was now to concentrate on Mt. Monticelli while the 1 Division employed its 66 Brigade west of Highway 6521 toward Mt. Pratone. Between these forces the 85th Division would attack, the 338th Infantry under Col. William H. Mikkelsen to pass through the 363d Infantry on Mt. Altuzzo and the 339th Infantry under Colonel Brady to take Mt. Verruca. The action of these forces on the 13th was not remarkable. For the attack on Mt. Altuzzo Colonel Mikkelsen employed the 2d Battalion astride Highway 6524 and the 1st Battalion up the main ridge leading to the crest of the mountain. During the morning no preparatory or supporting artillery fire could be used until the advance units of the 363d Infantry were accurately located; in effect the day's action was restricted to feeling out the enemy defenses and occupying ground from which new attacks could be launched. At the end of the day the 2d Battalion had reached positions on either side of the highway in the vicinity of L' Uomo Morto while the 1st Battalion took up positions on the west side of the mountain northwest of Hill 624.

The 339th Infantry on the right jumped off from positions near the village of Grezzano two miles short of the crest of Mt. Verruca. The 1st Battalion on the left moved over the foothills to the western arm of the mountain and was halted on Hill 617 by crossfire from the eastern slopes of Mt. Altuzzo and from a strongpoint on Hill 691 farther up the ridge. The 2d Battalion went up the right arm of the mountain with the first objective of taking Hill 732 but was stopped short of that point. To the east of Mt. Verruca one company of the 2d Battalion aimed at

but did not reach Rotto Hill. A night attack by the 2d Battalion failed to make further gains, and by the end of the day it was evident that Mt. Verruca was as well fortified as Mt. Altuzzo. Attacks directed against either Hill 691 or Hill 732 were subject to crossfire from the strongpoint on the other hill as well as to flanking fire from Mt. Altuzzo and Rotto Hill.

For the 363d Infantry on the lower slopes of Mt. Monticelli the corps plan of attack for the morning of 13 September was confused by the action of the previous night. At 0600, when the attack was to begin, the 3d Battalion was being driven back by an enemy counterattack, and it was unable to do more than hold its positions at L' Uomo Morto. Farther to the west the 1st Battalion reorganized before dawn, repeated its attempt of the previous night, but got only to the southwestern slopes of Al Pozzo Hill. The 2d Battalion was committed on its right at 1600 with the objective of seizing Hill 871, the eastern summit of the mountain; minefields and then intense concentrations of machine-gun fire stopped the attack on the slope of Hill 763 to the southwest of the summit.

By the end of the 13th the possibility that the enemy would withdraw from the Gothic Line without fighting was gone. On the contrary the battle for Il Giogo Pass had already begun to assume the proportions of an exhausting and bloody slugging match. On the night of 12-13 September the 91st Division had sent two battalions to seize the summits of both Mt. Monticelli and Mt. Altuzzo. Twenty-four hours later with all three of its battalions committed against Mt. Monticelli alone the 363d Infantry had succeeded only in making contact with the enemy's prepared defenses. Those defenses had not yet been dented at any point, and casualties in the assault units had begun to mount. The 338th and 339th Infantry were meeting equally stiff resistance from Mt. Altuzzo and Mt. Verruca, and similar reports were coming in from units all along the II Corps front. The enemy was fighting a skillful defensive action, laying in his mortar fire in every gully where our troops sought cover and sweeping the open slopes of the mountains with automatic fire. His defenses too were proving more extensive than previous reports had indicated. Their location was exposed only as the forward troops came within range of the hidden machine-gun emplacements or when artillery fire plowed up the earth and tore away the protective camouflage. The attacks on 13 September,

though they failed to attain their objectives, served to locate many of these positions; the work of reducing them had hardly begun.

The strength of the enemy defenses and the determination on the part of the 4th Parachute Division to hold its positions at all costs left us no alternative but to feed additional companies and battalions into the attack while concentrating every available weapon on the enemy defenses. The artillery also laid down heavy harassing fires on the reverse slopes of the mountains in an effort to isolate the area under attack from supplies and reinforcements, but the infantry still had to drive the enemy from his positions and to hold the ground won against his quickly organized counter-attacks. So far as possible the attacks were coordinated at the corps and division level and were launched simultaneously on a broad front, but in most cases the fighting resolved into a series of small-unit actions which resulted less in ground gained than in the gradual wearing down of the enemy strength.

For the attack on Mt. Altuzzo the 338th Infantry continued to employ the 2d Battalion astride Highway 6524 and the 1st Battalion up the main ridge line. A small group of the 2d Battalion on the 14th got as far as the bare rocky slope of Peabody Ridge, a secondary peak just west of the summit of Mt. Altuzzo, but had to be withdrawn that night. The 2d Battalion was in the difficult position of being constantly under fire from both Mt. Altuzzo and Mt. Monticelli, neither of which was in its zone of operations; and it could do little beyond matching the progress of the units on its flanks. The 1st Battalion made a spectacular but abortive advance on the same day, reaching the exposed rocky peak of Peabody Ridge. Unable to exploit their success, our men clung to the peak until dark when they were ordered to pull back. A new attack on the 15th got to the base of Hill 962, then fell back when our own artillery fire began to land among our men. The initiative in the attack was lost, and at the end of the day the summit of Mt. Altuzzo was still firmly in enemy hands.

The 339th Infantry, unable to gain ground in its attacks against Mt. Verruca, concentrated its efforts on the 14th toward knocking out the enemy defenses. Division artillery and the cannon company shelled the heights, and direct fire from tanks, tank destroyers, antitank guns, and artillery was placed on each visible pillbox. In the afternoon fighter-bombers hit the reverse slope of the main ridge directly to the north and Mt. Pratone

to the northeast. A regimental attack was then launched at midnight and continued the next morning in an effort to take Hill 691 and Hill 732 by storm. The troops were unable to get through the mines and barbed wire protecting the enemy positions, and were repeatedly driven back by mortar and machine-gun fire.

On the west side of Highway 6524 the 91st Division was experiencing similar difficulty in reaching the crest of Mt. Monticelli. After the first efforts failed on the 13th it became necessary to concentrate the whole of the 363d Infantry on Mt. Monticelli, leaving the 362d Infantry under Col. John W. Cotton in front of Futa Pass with a front of nearly five miles. In an effort to relieve some of the strain on the 362d Infantry and to apply pressure on the west side of Mt. Monticelli General Livesay committed the 361st Infantry under Colonel Broedlow along the ridge line north of Sant' Agata to pass through the left elements of the 363d Infantry and swing around Mt. Monticelli to the portion of the divide lying to the northwest of it. The regiment attacked on the morning of the 14th on a two-battalion front, the 3d Battalion moving up the west side of the central ridge and the 1st Battalion on the right. Supported by artillery fire directed against enemy positions on Roncolombello Hill to the north of Mt. Monticelli and aided by a smoke screen, the 1st Battalion progressed steadily until it had reached the southeastern slopes of Hill 844, the focal point of the enemy defenses on the central ridge line. There it was held up by fire from both Hill 844 and Roncolombello Hill. The left flank of the 3d Battalion was stopped at Hill 574 north of the hamlet of Montepoli, leaving the two battalions strung out across the ridge on a northeast-southwest line. Repeated efforts the next day to breach the enemy defenses along the central ridge failed to break the stalemate. The commitment of the reserve regiment of the 91st Division served to pin down enemy troops which might otherwise have moved over to Mt. Monticelli; it failed to achieve the outflanking of the troops facing the 363d Infantry.

At dark on the 13th the 363d Infantry had all three battalions in the line, the 3d Battalion on the right at L' Uomo Morto, the 2d Battalion below Hill 763, and the 1st Battalion near Al Pozzo Hill. The latter unit swung around the 2d Battalion on the morning of the 14th in an effort to seize the long western slope of Mt. Monticelli and slowly worked its way up until the afternoon of the 15th, when it took the crest of the northwest

ridge. For the night the troops were pulled back from the exposed ridge, and the 1st Battalion consolidated positions along an embankment 100 yards below the crest. The 363d Infantry now had a leg up Mt. Monticelli; but the 2d Battalion was still below Hill 763, and the enemy was in possession of Hill 871, the summit of the mountain.

At the end of two days of continuous fighting the 91st and 85th Divisions had gained but little ground, and there was no visible evidence that the enemy had been weakened at any point along the front. Our losses were heavy and steadily mounting; enemy losses, due to the protection afforded by his prepared defenses, were probably much lower; and, if the steady pounding of the greatly superior artillery of II Corps had knocked out many of the enemy pillboxes and reinforced dugouts, many others were still intact. Added to the strain of being almost constantly under fire, the forward troops received only a minimum of supplies. After the troops left the foothills of the mountains all rations and ammunition had to be brought forward at night by mule or hand carry. What was not immediately evident was that the enemy was experiencing ever greater difficulty in supplying his troops and particularly in getting replacements and reinforcements forward to the 11th and 12th Parachute Regiments, which were attempting to hold an area extending from west of Mt. Calvi to Mt. Verruca. The two regiments had been engaged from the beginning of the II Corps offensive, and the losses suffered in the costly war of attrition being fought all along the II Corps front rapidly reduced their strength. The enemy did not realize the power of our attack until the 14th, and the bulk of his hasty reinforcements did not arrive until the night of 16-17 September, when the battered paratroopers were approaching a state of exhaustion.

To expand the zone of our attacks the 337th Infantry under Colonel Hughes was committed on the 16th on the right, to pass through the 66 Brigade when it took Mt. Pratone and drive northwest through the zone of the 339th Infantry, so outflanking the enemy defenses. The 66 Brigade, which had reached Prefetto Hill one and one-half miles south of Mt. Pratone on the 15th, made only limited advances on the 16th, and the 337th Infantry took over the attack after noon. It was halted, however, 1000 yards short of the objective; efforts of the 339th Infantry to take Signorini Hill also failed. The attempt to outflank the

enemy had succeeded only in broadening the 85th Division front and in stepping up the process of attrition.

On the night of 16-17 September the focus of interest shifted from the flanking thrust against Mt. Pratone back to Mt. Altuzzo, where the 1st Battalion, 338th Infantry, repeated the attack made on the 15th. Following an hour-long concentration of artillery fire on the summit and partly concealed by a smoke screen, the 1st Battalion jumped off at 1630, and early the next morning reported it was on Hill 926, the higher of the two peaks marking the summit of Mt. Altuzzo.<sup>2</sup> The enemy's power of resistance, worn down by days of shelling and repeated infantry assaults, finally had cracked. Mopping up continued throughout the day, but by the morning of the 18th the 338th Infantry had achieved a clear break at the most important point in the Il Giogo Pass defenses.

The capture of Mt. Altuzzo on the 17th was accompanied by a general collapse of enemy resistance all along the 85th Division front. The 339th Infantry took Hills 732 and 691 and then the crest of Mt. Verruca by noon together with Signorini Hill and Rotto Hill on the right. The 2d Battalion, Infantry Lehr Brigade, which had arrived on the previous night to relieve the battered 3d Battalion, 12th Parachute Regiment, was caught just as it was taking up its new positions. Already disorganized by artillery fire on its way up Mt. Verruca, the battalion was almost completely destroyed by the 339th Infantry; what was left of one company of the 12th Parachute Regiment surrendered. Since the 337th Infantry had taken Mt. Pratone on the afternoon of the 17th, the 85th Division at the close of the day held all the major heights on the great divide between the Sieve and Santerno valleys on a front extending nearly four miles from Mt. Altuzzo to beyond Mt. Pratone. The powerful enemy defenses, which had withstood four days of steady pounding, had been smashed, and the dominant terrain east of Il Giogo Pass had been wrested from the enemy. There now remained the task of taking Mt. Monticelli to clear Highway 6524 and open the way for a drive to the Santerno Valley.

Renewed attacks by the 363d and 361st Infantry west of Il Giogo Pass had brought no gains on the 16th, but the capture of Mt. Altuzzo made it imperative that the heights in this area be taken speedily. The 1st Battalion, 363d Infantry, on the northwest ridge of Mt. Monticelli was still fighting off counterattacks,

and the 2d Battalion was fully engaged with pillboxes to its front; the 3d Battalion, however, moved forward on the afternoon of the 17th behind a barrage laid down by the 347th Field Artillery Battalion and took the crest of Mt. Monticelli within two hours, spurred on by the presence of the division commander. During the night the enemy evacuated his remaining positions on Mt. Monticelli and on the hills before the 361st Infantry. II Corps now controlled a seven-mile stretch of the Gothic Line on either side of Il Giogo Pass.

Since the opposing 4th Parachute Division was badly crippled and had no prepared positions behind the pass into which to retreat, the enemy had no choice but to pull back north of the Santerno under close pressure from the 85th and 91st Divisions. The 85th Division advanced with all three of its regiments in the line in the same order in which they had reached the crest of the main divide. On the left the 338th Infantry drove straight north along the axis of Highway 6524 to Firenzuola, occupying the bomb-shattered road center on the 21st and pushing a mile to the north of the town the next day. (*See Map 33.*) In the center the 339th Infantry trudged north from Mt. Verruca along the eastern rim of the Violla Creek valley, which slopes down to the Santerno River at Firenzuola. By the 21st Mt. Frena and Mt. Coloreta, the two peaks guarding the entrance to the gorge through which the Santerno River enters the mountains, were captured, and the next day advance elements took Mt. Collina two miles north of Mt. Coloreta. Farther down the gorge the 337th Infantry crossed the Santerno at the village of San Pellegrino on the 20th after two days of traveling through almost trackless mountains. The following day the regiment passed into division reserve when the 88th Division moved up from corps reserve to take over the right flank of II Corps.

Enemy opposition, negligible on the 19th, increased as the 85th Division approached the Santerno Valley, but the scattered reinforcements from the 362d Grenadier, 44th Grenadier, and 715th Grenadier Divisions were not yet present in sufficient strength to permit the enemy to do more than fight brief delaying actions. Nor was the Santerno River a major obstacle. In spite of a short rain on the 20th and heavy rains the following day which flooded some of the roads and hindered the forward displacement of artillery units, the river remained fordable. More difficulty was experienced with enemy long-range artillery firing from the

vicinity of Radicosa Pass and from self-propelled guns operating in the valley. The artillery fire held up construction of Bailey bridges at Firenzuola for two days, and truck movements in and near the town had to be screened with smoke.

West of Highway 6524 the 361st and 363d Infantry were held up less by enemy opposition than by the lack of roads, which increased the problems of supplying the forward units and evacuating the wounded. Division engineers extended the narrow mountain road north of Sant' Agata an additional two miles to reach the southern slope of the main divide. From this point it was necessary to use pack mules to cross the hump to the Santerno Valley. Farther to the west a similar mule point was established at the village of Panna. Forward elements of the two regiments reached the Santerno River on the 21st along a front extending from just west of Firenzuola to the village of Castro San Martino, two miles east of Futa Pass. With control of the Santerno Valley assured the troops who had broken through the Gothic Line at Il Giogo Pass had effectively outflanked the Futa Pass defenses. They were now prepared to strike north toward Radicosa Pass and northeast toward Imola and the Po Valley.

#### 4. THE REST OF THE ARMY LINE

13-22 September 1944

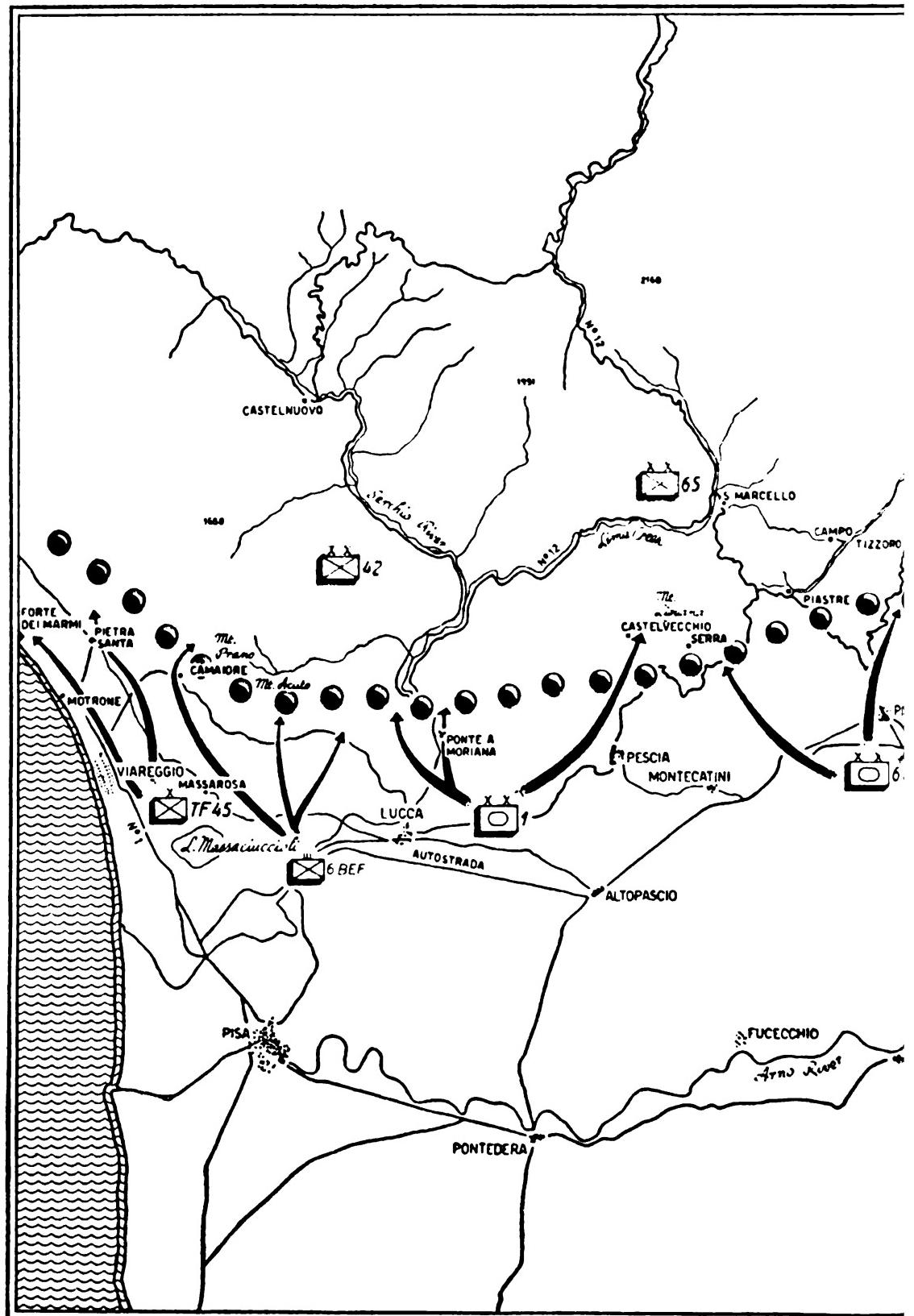
The fighting had not been restricted to the breakthrough at Il Giogo Pass, for during 13-22 September the troops of Fifth Army were attacking all along the front and had everywhere pushed farther into the mountains. Directly to the left of the Il Giogo Pass area the remaining regiment of the 91st Division, the 362d Infantry, had been engaged in the important mission of opening up Futa Pass itself. At the start of the general II Corps attack on the 13th the 3d Battalion drove north along the broad ascending ridge which carries Highway 65, and the 2d Battalion attacked Mt. Calvi in an effort to reach the main divide, swing west to take Mt. Gazzaro overlooking the main Futa Pass defenses, and so strike these positions from the flank. On a regimental front the 362d Infantry was trying to accomplish the same flanking move which II Corps was carrying out at Il Giogo Pass.

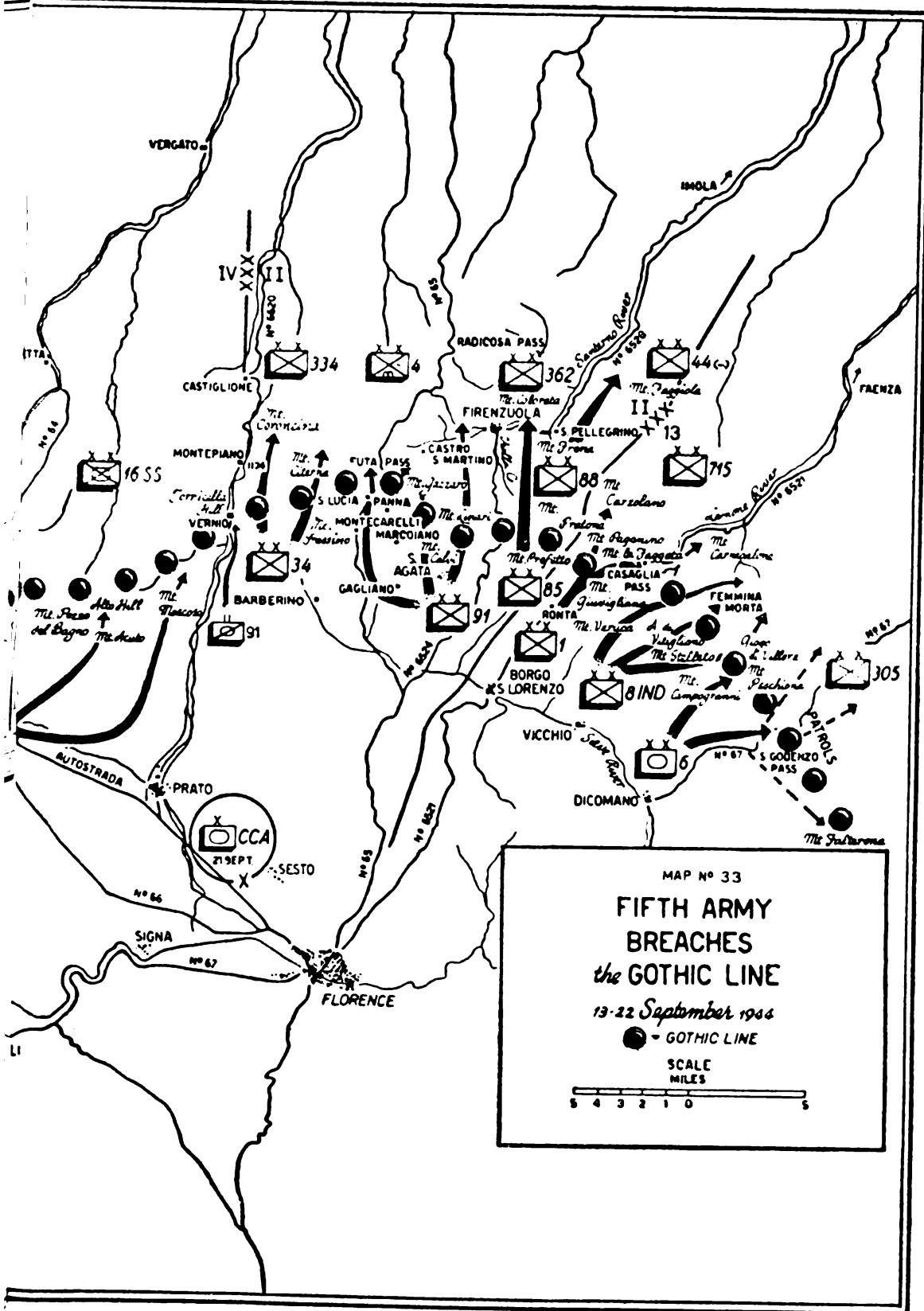
Up to the fall of Mt. Calvi, which the 2d Battalion had consolidated by the evening of the 14th, all went well. Then enemy

resistance stiffened, and neither the 2d nor the 1st Battalion was able to push far north of Mt. Calvi until the 20th, when the enemy pulled back and the two battalions gained the lower slopes of Mt. Gazzaro. The 3d Battalion, which had held at the anti-tank ditch below Santa Lucia since the 16th, crossed the ditch on the 20th, and a pincers attack on 21-22 September put the 362d Infantry in control of the pass. To this regiment had fallen the honor of clearing Futa Pass, the objective which more than any other was a symbol of the Gothic Line. Those positions to which the Germans had devoted months of hard labor were taken by the troops of one battalion in one of the least costly of the Gothic Line battles, thanks to the breakthrough at Il Giogo Pass. Now, in turn, Highway 65 could be utilized to bring up badly needed supplies to the troops who had spearheaded the attack through the mountains.

To the left of the 362d Infantry the 34th Division completed the II Corps attack by delivering a two-regiment containing attack against the portion of the Gothic Line lying between Highways 65 and 6620. Although not crowned with such spectacular successes as the capture of the key passes to its right, the action of the 34th Division played a vital part in the II Corps offensive. By exerting constant pressure on the enemy positions to its front it succeeded in protecting the corps left flank, in pinning down enemy forces which might otherwise have been shifted east to the Il Giogo Pass area, and in gaining possession of ground essential to the carrying out of the next phase of the Army attack. In the course of the fighting the enemy did reduce the long front held by the 4th Parachute Division by withdrawing the 10th Parachute Regiment from the Mt. Frassino area, but only by replacing the paratroopers with elements of the 334th Grenadier Division which had been located west of Highway 6620.

By the night of 12 September the 133d Infantry on the left was stopped before strong defenses on Torricella Hill, approximately five miles due south of the division's major objective, Mt. Coroncina, control of which would block the possibility of an enemy counterattack from the west. On the division right the 135th Infantry, after relieving the 168th Infantry on the night of the 12th, prepared to attack Mt. Frassino. Three miles to the north across steadily rising ground lay the next major objective, Mt. Citerna. Between the forward elements of the 34th Division and the objectives to the north lay the defenses of the





Gothic Line, a mile behind the outpost line which immediately faced us.

During 13-21 September the 133d Infantry was engaged in a slow, almost yard-by-yard struggle to break through the defenses on Torricella Hill. Every high point on the many-knobbed mountain was stoutly defended by the troops of the 334th Grenadier Division, who repeatedly counterattacked in an effort to retake each lost feature. As the leading elements of the 133d Infantry drove forward, they were constantly harassed by fire from a ridge to the left of Torricella Hill until the attack to the north was halted temporarily on the night of 18-19 September and full attention devoted to driving the Germans from their flanking positions. Enemy shelling also was unusually heavy on the left flank of the 34th Division, where the troops were within easy range of a large concentration of enemy artillery located in the vicinity of the village of Montepiano on Highway 6620. The extremely rough terrain and the lack of roads to the rear multiplied the problems of evacuation and supply. Long litter hauls absorbed the energies of men needed for the attack, and all supplies had to be carried into the mountains on mules. Lack of roads also prevented extensive use of tanks or tank destroyers during the first days of the attack, but division engineers, working night and day, finally improved the road from Barberino to Santa Margherita so that armored vehicles could move up to lay direct fire on the Torricella Hill defenses. Aided by the armor, the 133d Infantry took the mountain on the 21st. Resistance dwindled the next day as the enemy prepared to fall back, and Montepiano was entered on the 23d, placing the 133d Infantry through the Gothic Line and less than two miles from Mt. Corroncina.

On the right the 135th Infantry met equally stubborn resistance, and the problems of supply and evacuation, if somewhat easier than in the zone of the 133d Infantry, were still difficult. The road system did not disappear completely until the main divide was reached; but beyond Mt. Frassino mules and hand packing were necessary, and assistance was needed from the engineers to get armored vehicles forward. Two days of bitter fighting were required to take Mt. Frassino; then the regiment made rapid gains and held Mt. Citerna by the 22d. To take advantage of the enemy's weakness the 168th Infantry was committed in the division center on the 21st. All three regiments of

the 34th Division were now through the Gothic Line and in position to attack north toward Mt. Coroncina and northeast toward Radicosa Pass together with the other divisions of II Corps.

The attacks launched on 13-22 September by 13 Corps to the right and by IV Corps to the left of II Corps had the primary purpose of pinning down enemy troops which might otherwise be shifted to meet the main attack and the secondary purpose of paving the way for a rapid exploitation once II Corps made its breach at Il Giogo Pass. On the right 13 Corps concentrated its efforts along Highway 6521 so as to assist the advance of II Corps and protect the right flank of that unit. The 1 Division attacked up the road itself to seize Casaglia Pass; the 8 Indian Division in the center climbed through the almost trackless mountains north of Vicchio, ten miles wide between Highways 6521 and 67, to outflank the enemy astride Highway 6521; and the 6 Armoured Division operated astride Highway 67 with the main effort on the left to assist the 8 Indian Division. The success of General Kirkman's plans for 13 Corps depended to a large degree on the ability of the 8 Indian Division to negotiate the mountainous central sector and get in behind the elements of the 715th Grenadier Division opposite the 1 Division.

In the action the 66 Brigade pushed toward Mt. Pratone on the left flank of the 1 Division until relieved by the 337th Infantry on the 16th; on the right first the 3 Brigade and then the 2 Brigade battered at Ronta and Mt. Giuvigliana until the enemy withdrawal as a result of the II Corps breakthrough permitted easier advance. By the 22d the 1 Division had control of Casaglia Pass and was working its way northeast across the mountains on each side of the Lamone River gorge. The 8 Indian Division under General Russell had been so held up by the mountains, including the Alpe di Vitigliano and Femmina Morta features, that it had been unable to trap any of the enemy force on Highway 6521. In the right part of the 13 Corps zone the 6 Armoured Division under General Murray concentrated primarily on taking Mt. Peschiena to the north of San Godenzo Pass so as to aid the Indians; the 1 Guards Brigade began its attack on the 15th and cleared the mountain completely by the 18th. At the end of the period of the Gothic Line fighting the 6 Armoured Division, as well as the other units of 13 Corps, was pushing forward in an effort to maintain contact with the retreating enemy.

The left flank of II Corps had been guarded during 13-22

September by the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, which patrolled a long stretch along Highway 6620 below Vernio, and also by the right elements of IV Corps. In particular the 11 South African Armoured Brigade, the right flank element of the 6 South African Armoured Division, did its utmost to keep abreast of the 34th Division, but the enemy reluctance to yield the Alto Hill-Mt. Pozzo del Bagno area southwest of Vernio resulted in a growing gap between the left of II Corps and the right of IV Corps. When the 4/13 FFR (Frontier Force Rifles) took Alto Hill on the 16th, the 362d Grenadier Division launched four separate counterattacks through the heavy underbrush in an unsuccessful effort to regain the height. To the left the ILH/KimR (Imperial Light Horse/Kimberley Regiment) had an equally hard battle in taking and holding Mt. Pozzo del Bagno.

Along the remainder of the IV Corps front the 6 South African Armoured Division, the 1st Armored Division, and Task Force 45 followed up the enemy whenever he withdrew. The 1st Armored Division was hampered by orders to be ready to move at least in part to II Corps in the event a favorable opportunity for the use of our armor arose, and so had to hold a substantial portion of its strength in reserve. At 2400, 15 September, a new element entered the IV Corps line when Brig. Gen. Euclides Zenobio da Costa, commander of the 6th Combat Team, Brazilian Expeditionary Force (BEF), assumed responsibility for a five-mile-wide zone of mountainous terrain lying between the coastal plain and the Serchio Valley. As the first Brazilian troops to fight on European soil the commitment of this portion of the BEF was an event of international significance. For Fifth Army it represented the addition of a fresh regimental combat team at a time when the Army needed every available man to back up the attack on the Gothic Line. On its first day in action the 6th Combat Team took the village of Massarosa, north of Lake Massaciuccoli, then was held up in front of Mt. Prano and Mt. Acuto on 20-22 September.

The capture of Futa Pass on the 22d, following less than two weeks after the beginning of the Fifth Army offensive and five days after the initial breach in the enemy defenses at Il Giogo Pass, brought an end to the Gothic Line phase of the Fifth Army drive toward the Po Valley. Units on the right of II Corps had now reached Firenzuola and were already pushing down the Sarteno Valley toward Imola. At Mt. Faggioli, the most advanced

position of the freshly committed 88th Division, the II Corps forward line was over 10 miles beyond the shattered defenses of Il Giogo Pass and 30 miles northeast of the Arno River. Although the right flank had outstripped the left flank of II Corps, as well as 13 Corps to the east, all units of the two corps had passed through the Gothic Line on a 30-mile front extending from Vernio on Highway 6620 to San Godenzo Pass on Highway 67, and IV Corps was partially through the line at several points. In view of the strength of the vaunted Gothic Line and the nature of the terrain over which Fifth Army had fought, the speed with which the breach had been made represented a brilliant achievement.

The success had been due in large part to the skillful execution of the over-all Allied plan of attack and in turn to the careful timing, coordination of effort, and concentration of power in the Fifth Army attack, which afforded the enemy no opportunity to recover his equilibrium. The blow was so timed that it caught the enemy just when the bulk of his available forces had moved or was in the process of moving to the Adriatic to stabilize his broken line along the coast; it was so coordinated that pressure was maintained along the whole of the Fifth Army front, giving the enemy no indication of where the main effort would be made until the attack was well under way and it was impossible to shift troops to the threatened area in time to prevent a breakthrough; and at the point of the main attack at Il Giogo Pass the Army had so disposed its forces that it was able to strike with fresh troops and in overwhelming strength. Though casualties in the three assault divisions of II Corps had totalled 2,731 during 13-18 September, the price of the victory was not excessive, considering the strength of the enemy defenses and the tactical importance of the Gothic Line. Fifth Army could now capitalize on the disorganization of the enemy forces by introducing the fresh 88th Division; at the end of the Gothic Line fighting the drive toward the Po Valley was already under way.

## 5. THE THRUST TOWARD IMOLA

23-30 September 1944

Original plans called for II Corps, after breaking the Gothic Line at Il Giogo Pass, to concentrate its strength in a drive to the north along the axis of Highway 65. The capture of Bologna and the clearing of Highway 65 would give Fifth Army a first-class supply route across the mountains and in addition would make possible the fulfillment of our portion of the Allied plan for trapping the German Tenth Army south of the Po.

The success of the Allied plan, however, depended in part on the outcome of the Eighth Army offensive along the Adriatic coast. After falling back to the Coriano ridge south of Rimini, the retreating forces of Tenth Army had received sufficient reinforcements to slow and then halt the British attack on 4 September. The transfer of enemy units from the central front which had so greatly benefited our attack made it possible for Tenth Army to organize an effective defense and to counter-attack in strength. Eighth Army did not take Rimini, the gateway to the Po Valley, until 21 September; even with this foothold on the plain the beginning of the fall rains and the exhaustion of the troops prevented the Allied right flank from making gains of over a few hundred yards a day. General Clark therefore decided to direct a portion of II Corps toward the northeast to push down Highway 6528, which runs 30 miles in the Santerno Valley from Firenzuola to the open plain at Imola, and so aid the Eighth Army drive; 13 Corps on the right would attack toward Faenza. At the same time II Corps would continue the attack toward Radicosa Pass on Highway 65.

On the 20th II Corps issued orders to Brig. Gen. Paul W. Kendall, commanding the 88th Division, to assemble his troops near Mt. Altuzzo, pass through the right elements of the 85th Division, and attack down the Santerno at 0500, 21 September. The division attacked on schedule, and at the end of the 22d, when the 91st Division secured Futa Pass, it was moving rapidly through the steep hills on each side of the twisting, narrow Santerno River gorge, the 350th Infantry under Colonel Fry on the right and the 349th Infantry under Colonel Crawford on the left. By dark of the 23d the latter had moved north to Mt. la Fine, and the 351st Infantry under Colonel Champeny had been introduced in the division center. (*See Map 34.*) Poor supply routes, extremely rough terrain, and an exposed right flank proved more serious obstacles than the enemy, who was still disorganized by

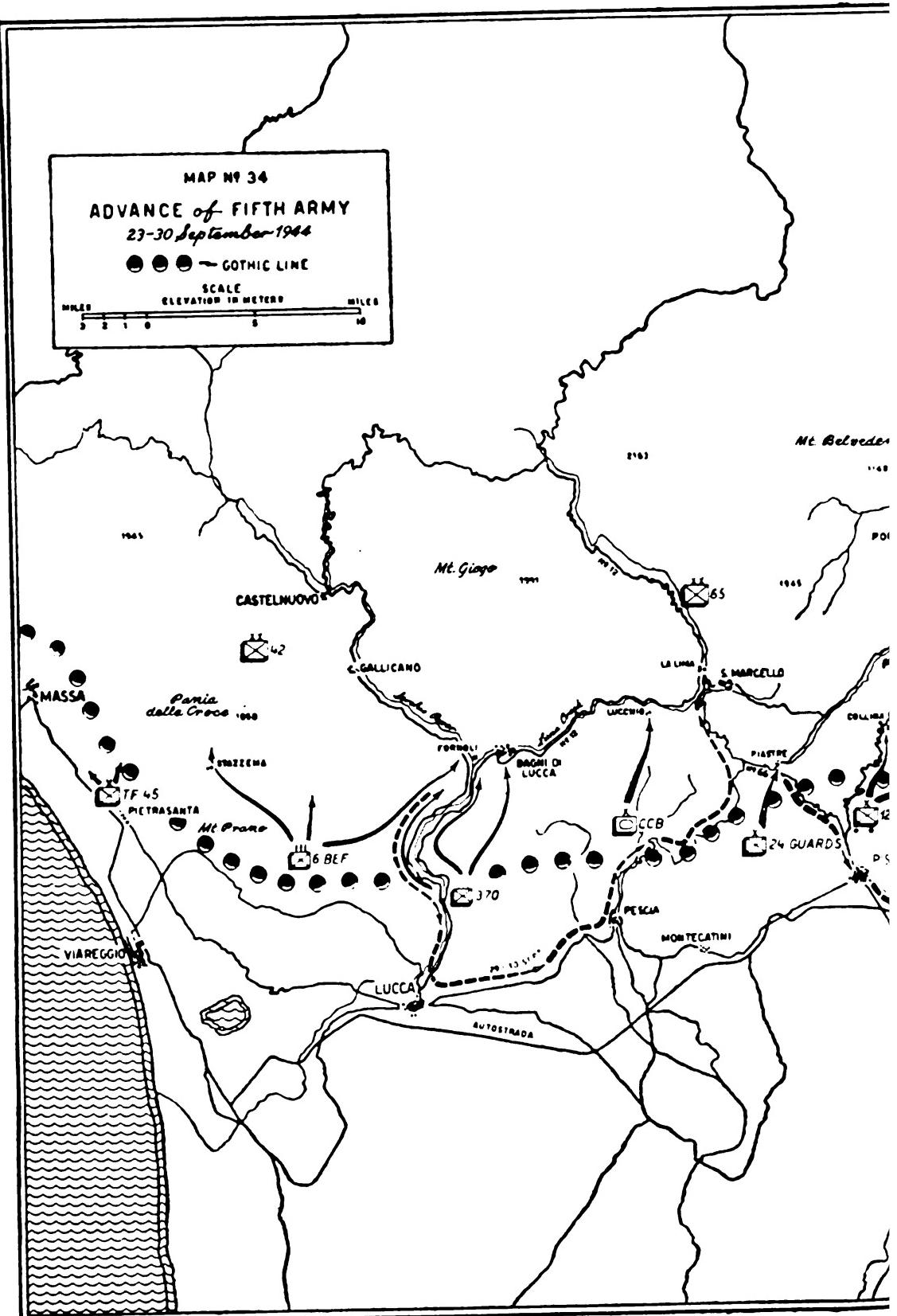
the defeat he had suffered in the Gothic Line fighting. The 88th Division moved forward much more rapidly than the 1 Division on its right, and the gap between the two divisions extended to as much as three miles; the headquarters of the 1st Battalion, 350th Infantry, was taken captive by an enemy force on this flank on the night of 21-22 September.

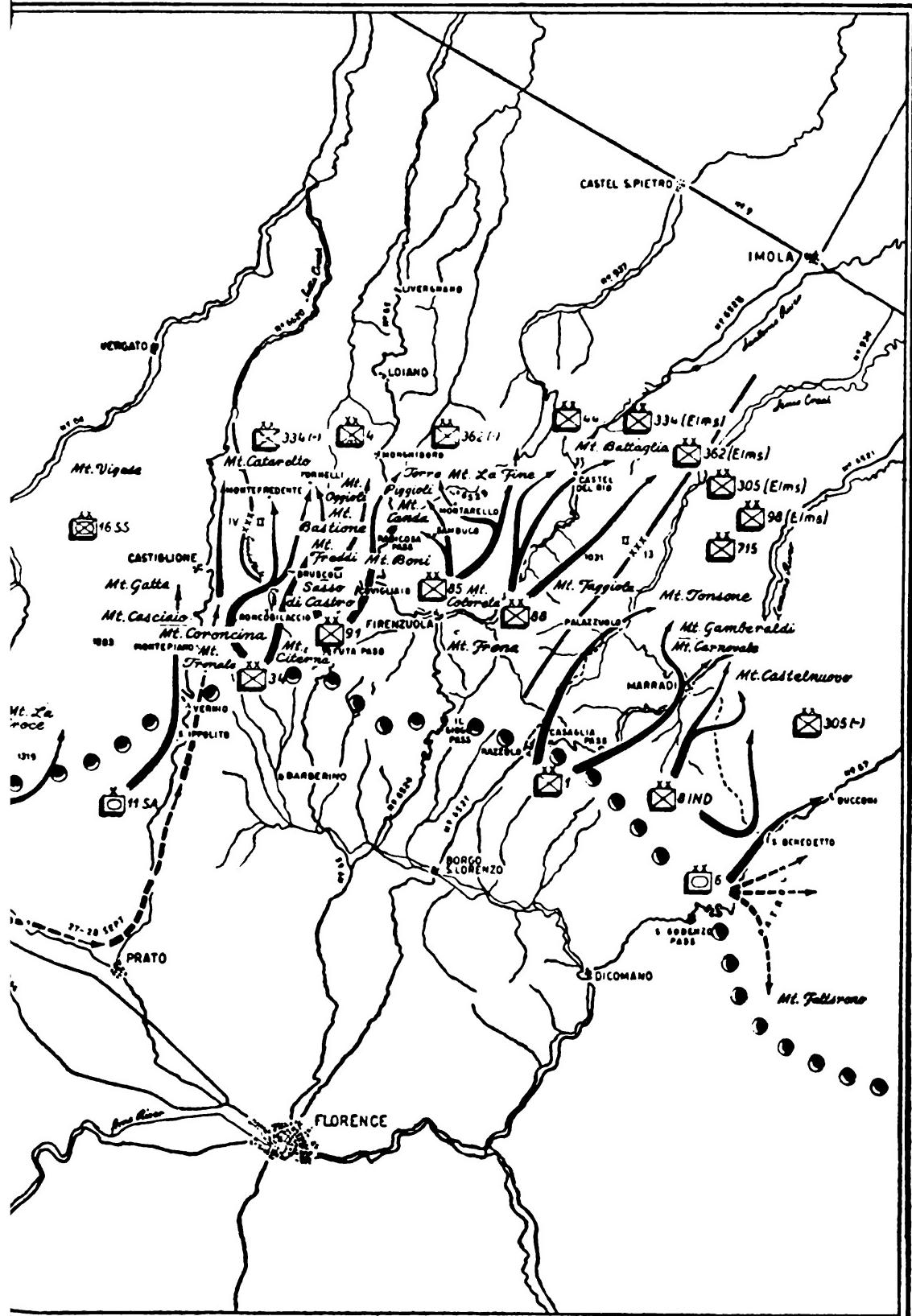
This drive on the right of II Corps served to open an ever widening gap between the weakened 4th Parachute and 715th Grenadier Divisions. The arrival of the 362d Grenadier Division by the 22d alleviated the situation north of Firenzuola, but as the 88th Division drove forward the bulge extended deeper into the enemy's lines and he made frenzied efforts to head off the threat. To the 305th Fusilier Battalion, elements of the 132d Grenadier Regiment, and rear echelon personnel of the 715th Grenadier Division already identified by the 85th Division, there were added miscellaneous scraps and, above all, the remainder of the 44th Grenadier Division. All three regiments of this division had arrived on the Santerno by 26 September.

Nonetheless, the 88th Division made preparations to attack Mts. Pratolungo, Carnevale, and Battaglia, three points forming a chain extending east and west through Castel del Rio and representing the last commanding peaks in the division zone. At 0600, 26 September, all three regiments jumped off. The 349th Infantry on the left had been relieved by the 337th Infantry on Mt. la Fine and concentrated its efforts against Mt. Pratolungo, which fell before dark on the 26th; here we captured a battalion commander and 52 men from the command post of the 1st Battalion, 134th Grenadier Regiment. Continuing along the ridge running north from Mt. Pratolungo, the next day the 349th Infantry acquired hills placing it in position to dominate Highway 937. To the right the 351st Infantry took Castel del Rio on the morning of the 27th. The 3d Battalion then moved on to the high ground lying in the V formed by the junction of Highway 937 with Highway 6528, while the remainder of the regiment swung northeast to capture Mt. Cappello, a task which required two days of hard fighting and was accomplished only on the 30th.

Southeast of Castel del Rio the 350th Infantry drove toward Mt. Carnevale, which the 2d Battalion took on the morning of the 27th. Partisans then led the battalion to the crest of Mt. Battaglia (715 meters) to the north by 1535. The most important

MAP N° 34  
ADVANCE of FIFTH ARMY  
23-30 September 1944  
● ● ● — GOTHIC LINE  
SCALE ELEVATION IN METERS





feature in the line of hills blocking the road to Imola had been taken without a struggle, and the 2d Battalion immediately began to dig in on its exposed position, well ahead of the 351st Infantry on the left and the 13 Corps units on its right.

Mt. Battaglia, or Battle Mountain as it was known to the 88th Division troops, was aptly named. The bold thrust of the 2d Battalion, 350th Infantry, had placed the battalion on the height before the Germans were aware of the depth of our attack; but, quick to realize the tactical importance of the breach, the enemy assembled all his available troops in an effort to retake the mountain before the 88th Division could exploit its success. Situated at the end of a long ridge, the 2d Battalion, 350th Infantry, was exposed to attacks from the northwest, east, and south, while all supplies and reinforcements were channelized along the narrow ridge to the southwest where they were subject to harassing artillery fire.<sup>3</sup> The enemy was further aided by a series of rainy, foggy days which were admirably suited to his tactics of infiltration and which largely nullified our superiority in artillery. On most days air observation planes were grounded, and neither direct air support nor the artillery ground observers could operate.

During the afternoon of 27 September while Company G was digging in around the ruins of an ancient castle on the summit of the mountain the sky clouded over, and heavy rain accompanied by thick fog drenched the tired men. Less than an hour after the first troops had arrived on the mountain and before Companies E and F were completely in position along the north-east spur elements of the 44th and 715th Grenadier Divisions launched a counterattack in company strength. Fighting in a driving rain, Company G held its positions. All through the night the enemy shelled the mountain; then at 0530, 28 September, behind an artillery and mortar barrage he struck again. The forward outposts of Company G were overrun, and the attacking troops were beaten back only after they had reached within a few yards of the crest. Several minor attacks developed during the morning as groups of 30 to 40 Germans attempted unsuccessfully to infiltrate through the lines.

In the afternoon the enemy laid down a heavy artillery and mortar fire for three hours; then a force of approximately four battalions from the 715th and 44th Grenadier Divisions launched a coordinated attack from the front and right flank. Carrying pole charges and flame throwers, the enemy troops again fought

their way almost to the summit before they were repulsed. Our troops were nearly out of ammunition when Company K arrived at 1930, accompanying a mule train with a partial load of ammunition and rations, the first that had reached the 2d Battalion. The reinforcements helped to relieve the critical situation, but nothing could be done to make the men more comfortable in the shell fire, cold rain, and flooded foxholes.

The artillery fire continued through the night of 28-29 September while the 2d Battalion and Company K worked at improving their positions and taking out the wounded. Problems of evacuation and supply over the narrow ridge trail to the rear were staggering. Movement was virtually impossible in daylight because the ridge was under enemy observation and subject to being cut by enemy patrols; at night troops using the trail had to maintain physical contact to avoid getting lost or falling off cliffs. The gray morning of the 29th, enveloped in rain and fog, brought another concentration of artillery fire and an attack by an enemy force estimated at a regiment in strength. By 0900 the attack had carried to the crest, and a few of the Germans penetrated all the way into the castle before they were driven back with hand grenades. Enemy shelling continued after the attack with over 400 rounds landing on the mountain between 0700 and 1000.

Despite the arrival of the rest of the 350th Infantry the enemy repeated his attack on the morning of the 30th and again reached the castle before being beaten back. The shelling continued throughout the day, wounding or killing our men one by one. Once again on 1 October, concealed in the fog and semi-darkness of the early morning hours, the German soldiers charged up the hill, but this time the attack ended disastrously. In less than an hour they were driven back down the mountain. Late in the day, when they assembled for another attack, they were dispersed by accurate artillery fire. Aided by clear skies in the afternoon, the 338th Field Artillery Battalion fired 3,398 rounds during the day, and for the first time the threat of counterbattery fire reduced the volume of enemy shelling. The addition of the 1st and 3d Battalions on the mountain had considerably improved the ability of the 350th Infantry to put up an effective defense; with the capture of Mt. Cappello by the 351st Infantry on 30 September and the arrival of British units on the right, the enemy was no longer able to attack from the flanks.

Despite his costly setbacks the enemy also had greatly strengthened his forces opposite Mt. Battaglia. By 1 October the 350th Infantry had identified elements of the 334th Grenadier Division brought over from the 34th Division front, the 44th Grenadier Division from opposite Eighth Army, elements of the 715th and 305th Grenadier Divisions from before 13 Corps, and one regiment of the 98th Grenadier Division from the Adriatic coast. These forces proved insufficient to retake Mt. Battaglia, but they effectively blocked the road to Imola. Once the enemy had built up sufficient forces to slow the rate of advance of the 88th Division the balance of logistics was all in his favor. Recognizing that the initiative had been lost and that the corridor through which the 88th Division was attacking was unsuitable for a larger force, Fifth Army shifted the emphasis of the II Corps offensive back to Highway 65.

Although the immediate tactical importance of Mt. Battaglia to Fifth Army diminished after the decision was made to abandon the drive to Imola, the enemy attempts to retake the mountain persisted into the first days of October. On the night of 3-4 October the 2d Battalion after seven days of continuous action turned over its positions to elements of 13 Corps and left the mountain; the remainder of the regiment was relieved the following evening. From 21 September, when the 88th Division entered the line, to 3 October inclusive the division suffered 2,105 battle casualties. The drive of the 88th Division toward Imola and in particular the defense of Mt. Battaglia came close to equalling the total casualties of II Corps during the six-day period of the breaching of the Gothic Line.

During this action on the right of II Corps, the other divisions of the corps had continued their drive north on Radicosa Pass, at which point the 85th, 91st, and 34th Divisions were to converge. The 85th Division was to take Mt. Canda on the east side of the pass; the 91st Division was to take Mt. Oggiali just west of the pass; and the 34th Division, concentrating its efforts along its right flank, was to take Mt. Bastione. These three mountains form a part of the main divide of the Northern Apennines, and in general are higher than the peaks of the water line on which the Gothic Line had been constructed. Though they lacked the fixed defenses of that belt, the steep, often completely bare slopes of the heights protecting Radicosa Pass offered a potentially strong defensive line.

Along the entire front from the 337th Infantry on Mt. la Fine to the 168th Infantry on Mt. Coroncina our troops met strong resistance during 23-27 September. The 4th Parachute and 334th Grenadier Divisions, much weakened in the previous fighting, had been extensively reinforced, especially by troops from the IV Corps front where our scanty forces were unable to pin down the enemy sufficiently to prevent shifts of his troops. The 334th Grenadier Division had moved east from this front during the height of the Gothic Line fighting; by 20 September the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division had replaced the 362d Grenadier Division in the area north of Pistoia, and the latter was identified opposite the 85th Division north of Firenzuola two days later.

Hardly, however, had the Germans established a new line in the Radicosa Pass sector when our capture of Mt. Battaglia presented the enemy with a new crisis requiring swift counter-measures. Elements of both the 362d and 334th Grenadier Divisions were moved east to join in the counterattacks against the 350th Infantry, and the equilibrium gained at Radicosa Pass was again upset. Faced with the necessity of continually regrouping its forces, the German Fourteenth Army could fight only delaying actions to hold off the 85th, 91st, and 34th Divisions as they struggled forward through the rain and mud of late September to reach their objectives; on 27-28 September the enemy took advantage of the heavy rains and pulled back of Radicosa Pass to a line running east and west through Monghidoro. This withdrawal permitted our three divisions to occupy their objectives at the pass on the 28th and to push patrols forward during the last days of the month, while consolidating positions, resting troops, and improving the miserable supply situation.

During the thrust toward Imola by the 88th Division and the drive on Radicosa Pass by the rest of II Corps, the units on either side of the main penetration continued their pressure in much the same fashion as in the period of the Gothic Line fighting. On the right 13 Corps again had the mission of exerting its main effort along the left flank to support the II Corps drive, but this time the 1 Division shifted north from Highway 6521 to Highway 934, running down Senio Creek to the Po Plain. The plan of action called for the 1 Division to open up the Marradi-Palazzuolo stretch of Highway 934; the 8 Indian Division to clear a secondary road from San Benedetto on Highway 67 to

Marradi and then drive down Highway 6521; and the 6 Armoured Division to make what progress it could along Highway 67.

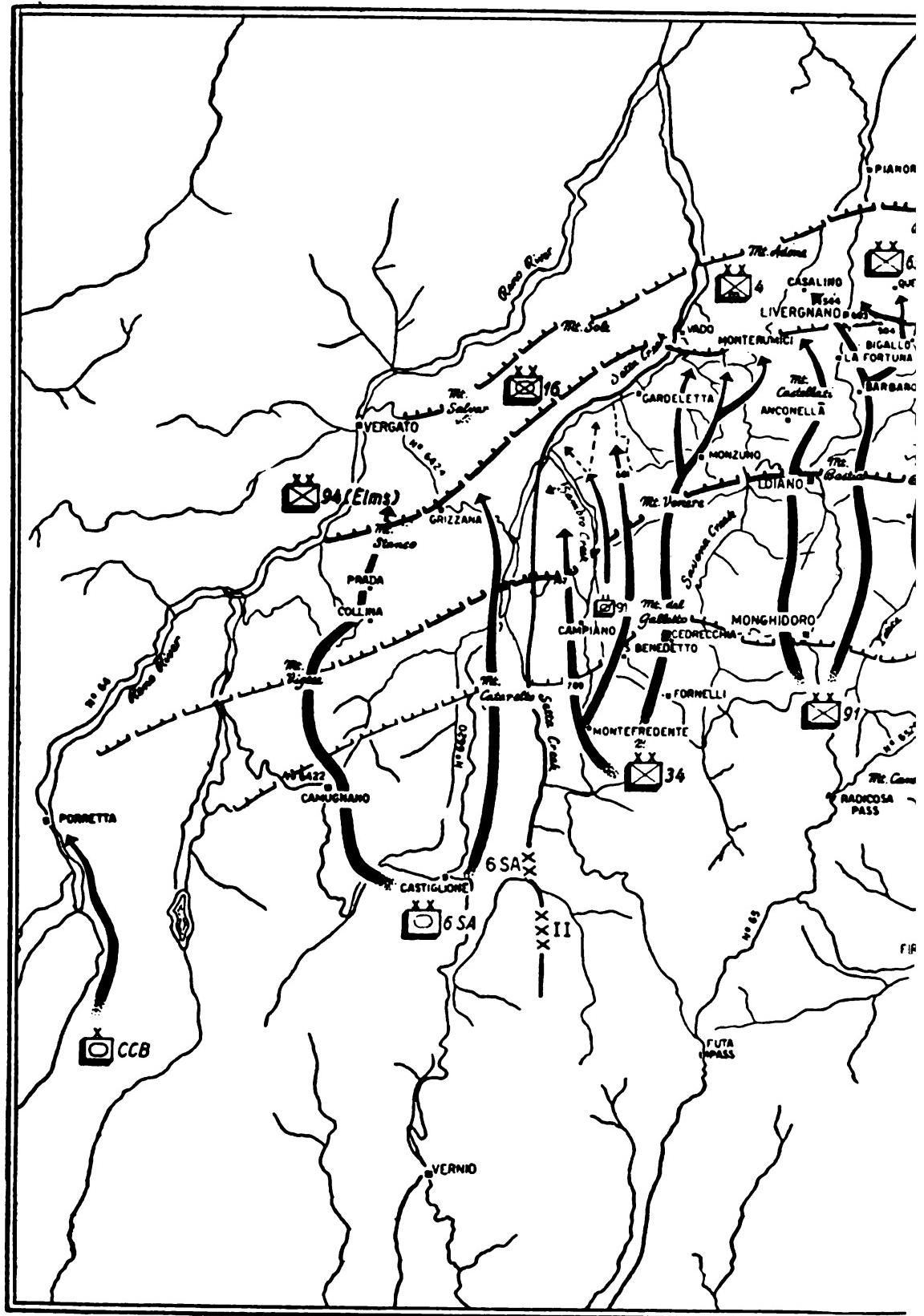
The enemy, composed chiefly of the 715th Grenadier Division, based his defense of the Marradi-Palazzuolo road on three heights, Mts. Carnevale, Gamberaldi, and Toncone, to the northeast of the road, but yielded these points to the 1 Division by the last days of the month. Thereafter the division prepared to drive down Highway 934 so as to make contact with the 88th Division at Mt. Battaglia. The 8 Indian Division reached both ends of the San Benedetto-Marradi road by the 25th, then was held up on Mt. Castelnuovo until the 305th Grenadier Division evacuated that point at the end of the month. On the right the 6 Armoured Division, unable to use its tanks in the mountains, was forced to guard a long right flank and could do little but patrol its front.

With the shift of German units from the IV Corps front and the advance of II Corps up Highway 65, the enemy before IV Corps was forced to give ground to avoid the possibility of being outflanked. Thus, although no general offensive was launched by IV Corps, its troops continued to move forward and by the end of the month had left behind the Gothic Line defenses with the exception of the coastal stretch above Massa. The transfer of the 1st Armored Division (less Combat Command B) to II Corps on 21-24 September forced a reshuffling of the limited troops on the IV Corps front; by the end of the month the corps line was held from left to right by Task Force 45, the 6th Combat Team (BEF), Task Force 92, Combat Command B, and the 6 South African Armoured Division.<sup>4</sup> All units under the command of IV Corps thus had additional territory in their zones except the 6 South African Armoured Division, which from the 28th concentrated in a narrow zone astride Highway 6620 so as better to protect the left flank of II Corps. On this date the corps boundary was shifted two miles east of Highway 6620, and the 24 Guards Brigade, leaving its previous zone on Highway 66 to Task Force 92, entered the line about Mt. Coroncina. By the 30th the 1 Scots Guards, fighting on the upper slopes of Mt. Catarelto, were abreast of the leading elements of the 34th Division.

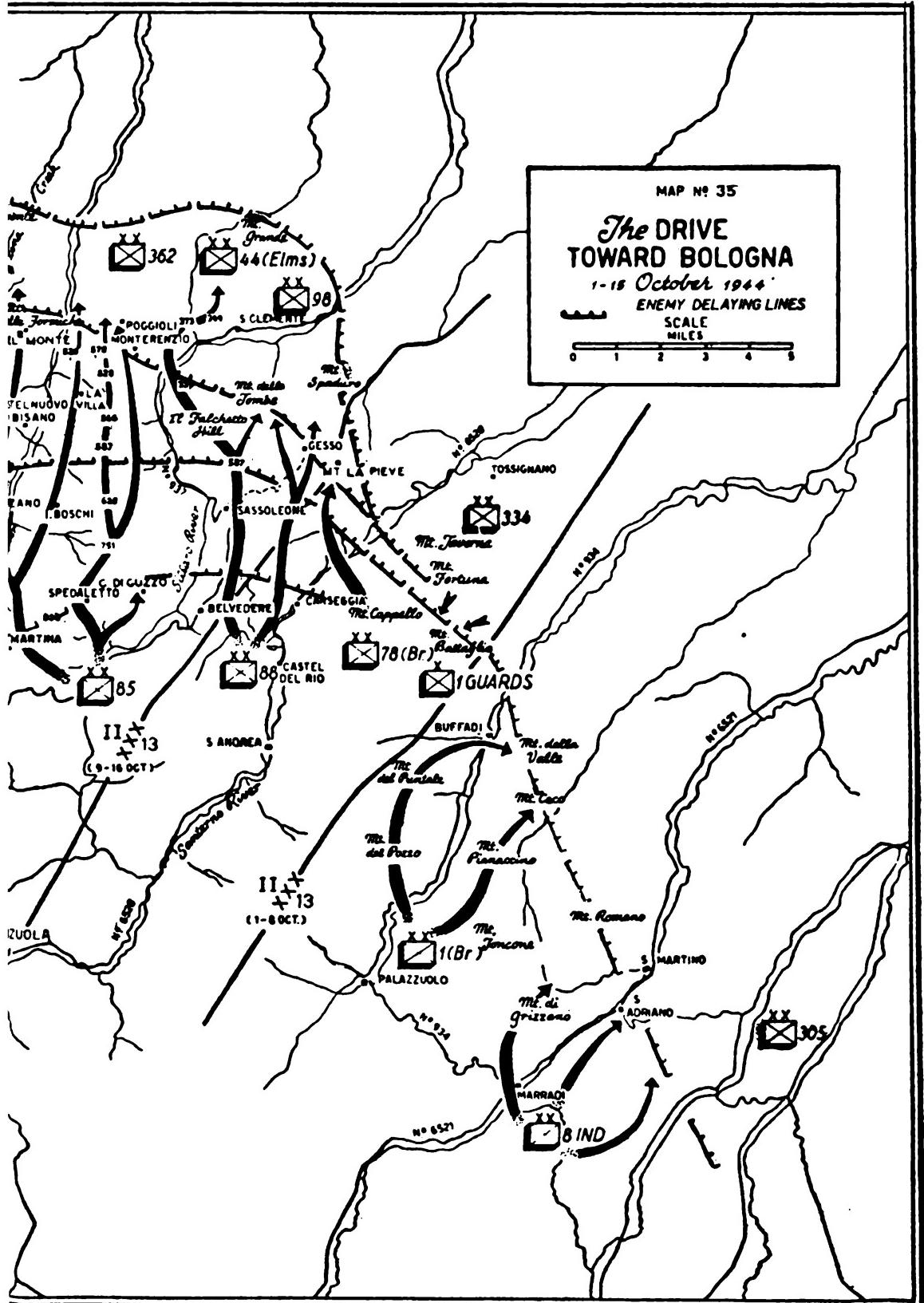
At the end of September Fifth Army had reason to anticipate an early end to the fighting in the mountains. It had won control of 41 of the 65 road miles separating Florence from Bologna, and troops on Mt. Battaglia were within visual range of the Po Plain. Nonetheless, certain aspects of the fighting during the

last week of September gave evidence of a relative improvement in the enemy position. Mounting casualties and battle-weariness were beginning to sap the offensive strength of the attacking troops. The enemy too had suffered heavy casualties, but as a result of the slowing down of the Eighth Army offensive and the inability of IV Corps to pin down all the enemy units originally on its front Marshal Kesselring was able to shift more and more divisions to contain the bulge formed by the II Corps attack. From a strength of one full division and elements of two others facing II Corps on the 13th, the enemy forces identified on the II Corps front had grown by the 30th to four full divisions—the 334th Grenadier, 4th Parachute, 362d Grenadier, and 44th Grenadier Divisions—and elements of three others with additional units on the way.

The weather also worked to the benefit of the enemy. With the beginning of the fall rains trails and secondary roads turned into muddy quagmires, complicating supply and service functions already made difficult by the distance the Army had moved from base installations and dumps in the Florence area. Fog and mist accompanying the rains concealed enemy troop movements and did much to counterbalance our superiority in air power and artillery. Rover Joe<sup>5</sup> operated on only two of the last seven days of the month. XXII Tactical Air Command succeeded in flying 1,904 sorties in the period 20-30 September, mainly directed against Highway 65 and other lines of communication, but its planes were grounded on the last three days of the month when the enemy was pulling back from Radicosa Pass and shifting troops to the Mt. Battaglia area. Similarly, artillery observation planes were held down on many days, and even ground observers were frequently unable to direct the fire. Weather conditions promised to deteriorate further as winter approached. The success of the Fifth Army offensive depended in large part on the ability of II Corps to reach the Po Valley before bad weather and the arrival of additional enemy troops nullified our temporary advantage.



MAP NO. 35  
**The DRIVE TOWARD BOLOGNA**  
 1-15 October 1944  
 ENEMY DELAYING LINES  
 SCALE  
 MILES  
 0 1 2 3 4 5



## 6. THE DRIVE TO THE NORTH

1-15 October 1944

At the beginning of October Fifth Army was prepared to shift the emphasis of its attack back to the axis of Highway 65. Although the 88th Division thrust had failed to carry through to the Po Valley, it had drawn considerable elements of the enemy from the central sector, and the division was still bearing the brunt of heavy counterattacks well into the first week of October, so serving as a useful diversion for our attacks next to be launched toward Bologna. North of Radicosa Pass, which fell on 28 September, the drainage pattern of the streams on each side of Highway 65 is generally northward with ridge lines lying between and paralleling the streams. Transverse ridges and tributary streams, characterized by dominating hill masses and deep gullies, cut across this pattern at intervals of three to four miles. At such intervals the hard-pressed enemy was afforded a series of delaying positions which he developed as fully as time permitted. After the loss of Radicosa Pass he fell back nearly four miles to a line of high ground which crosses Highway 65 at the village of Monghidoro. (*See Map 35.*) Here he faced our troops at the end of September. Four miles farther to the north Italian civilians were put to work improving a second and stronger natural line of defense stretching east and west through the village of Loiano; at roughly the same distances farther on were a third and fourth such line passing respectively through Livergnano and Pianoro. As soon as one of these "reserve" Gothic Lines had exhausted its usefulness the enemy could fall back to another, and II Corps would again be forced to regroup for a major attack.

For the October drive toward Bologna General Keyes planned to employ all four of his infantry divisions attacking simultaneously on a broad front. The 91st Division would continue to advance astride Highway 65 on a front approximately four miles wide. To the right the 85th Division, initially on a six-mile front, would advance between Zena Creek and the Sillaro River, thus working down the Idice River and the hills on either side. These two divisions were to form a spearhead of the attack with the emphasis to lie east of Highway 65. West of the 91st Division the 34th Division, in addition to attacking to the north, was to protect the corps flank along the line of Setta Creek; to the east the 88th Division was to perform a similar function on the corps right flank between the Sillaro and Santerno valleys.

The situation on the flanks of II Corps was not entirely satis-

factory even with this protection, for II Corps had pulled well ahead of the flanking elements of IV and 13 Corps in late September. The 88th Division in particular was faced with the task of protecting its right flank in the Santerno Valley while attacking to the north along the Sillaro River. To remedy this situation 13 Corps was ordered to relieve the elements of the 88th Division on Mt. Battaglia and in the Santerno Valley and so extend its front. First the 1 Guards Brigade from the 6 Armoured Division relieved the 350th Infantry on Mt. Battaglia on 2-4 October, and then, as soon as the British 78 Division under Brigadier R. K. Arbuthnott could be transferred from Eighth Army to complete the reliefs by taking over Mt. Cappello, the corps boundary was shifted north on the 9th. A change was also made on the left of II Corps on 5 October, when the 6 South African Armoured Division with Combat Command B attached passed from IV Corps to Army so as to permit closer coordination between the South African action and the advance of II Corps.

With the forward troops of II Corps approximately 24 road-miles from Bologna, of which at least 15 were through extremely rugged mountainous terrain, and with the enemy showing no evidence of making a large-scale withdrawal, it appeared likely that days of hard fighting lay ahead for the four divisions in the II Corps line. To provide a reserve II Corps ordered each division to hold out one regiment and to rotate the regiments in the line approximately every five days. Corps plans were so arranged that coordinated attacks were launched at intervals which coincided with the appearance of fresh units in the line. In practice this five-day system of rotating units and of launching attacks corresponded closely with the rate at which each enemy defense line was developed, first the Monghidoro line on 1-4 October, then the Loiano line on 5-9 October, and last of all the Livergnano line on 10-15 October.

At 0600, 1 October, following a prepared program of artillery fires which extended over a 16-mile front, the 88th, 85th, 91st, and 34th Divisions jumped off in the first coordinated attack. Only on the extreme right flank of II Corps where the 350th and 351st Infantry were fighting off enemy counterattacks against Mt. Battaglia and Mt. Cappello did the line remain stable; along the remainder of the corps front seven regiments and a portion of an eighth surged forward through the early morning mist. Their immediate objectives were enemy strongpoints hastily or-

ganized around clusters of stone farmhouses and dominating terrain features.

Once the morning mist cleared, 1 October proved to be a sunny day. Air and ground observers, aided by good visibility, provided excellent artillery support for the attacking troops; and Rover Joe, after several days of inactivity, was again able to direct a program of close air support. The good weather lasted for less than twenty-four hours. A cold, blustery wind and driving rain swept the mountains on the 2d, and with few interruptions low-hanging clouds, fog, and intermittent showers characterized the weather for the next week. Muddy trails and fields hampered the movement of tanks and tank destroyers and slowed the infantry. There was no decisive battle fought nor spectacular gain made during the first two days of the attack. In most cases the action was limited to engagements of small units as the scattered enemy strongpoints were neutralized and by-passed pockets of resistance were mopped up. Fighting a stubborn delaying action, the enemy fell back only when his positions were outflanked or overrun. Not until the third and fourth days, when he was forced back to the line of hills behind Loiano, did II Corps register substantial advances.

The first phase of the October drive toward Bologna closed on 4 October with each of the attacking divisions carrying out reliefs in preparation for a new attack on the morning of the 5th. In this period of four days the corps front was pushed northward approximately four miles and at two points for over five miles, an average of slightly more than one mile per day. The 88th Division on the far right had still been primarily engaged about Mt. Battaglia, but had sent the 349th Infantry forward against stiff opposition to the junction of Highways 6529 and 937 and then to Sassoleone on the east side of the Sillaro. Meanwhile the 3d Battalion, 351st Infantry, advancing slowly through the hills to the east of Highway 937, reached positions one and one-half miles northeast of Sassoleone. On the 85th Division front the 339th and 337th Infantry spearheaded the main corps attack, the former driving to the slopes of Mt. Bibele west of the Idice and the latter on the right pushing down the divide between the Idice and Sillaro to Hill 751 on the 2d and to Hill 566 on the 4th. Monghidoro and 103 prisoners fell to the 362d Infantry on the 2d, and both this regiment and the 363d Infantry on the left of Highway 65 were fighting the enemy on his next line a mile short of

Loiano by dark on the 4th. The two attack regiments of the 34th Division met the same stubborn resistance as the rest of II Corps but likewise fought their way forward, the 133d Infantry under Col. Gustav J. Braun on the right seizing first Mt. del Galleto on the 3d and then Mt. Venere and the 168th Infantry moving down the Sambro Valley to the slopes of Hill 747. At Mt. Venere and also on the ridge between the Idice and Sillaro II Corps had penetrated the enemy's second or Loiano line of defense.

On the basis of the relatively moderate casualties and the character of the fighting for the past four days it could be anticipated that II Corps would reach the Po Valley before the October rains turned to snow; it was unlikely that a swift breakthrough would be achieved, for the enemy was gradually succeeding in increasing the number of units in the central area below Bologna. The shift of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division to the east placed a strong unit opposite the left flank of the 34th Division; by 4 October there were indications that the whole of the 65th Grenadier Division was moving from the IV Corps front to take over from the 4th Parachute Division a sector astride Highway 65; and opposite the 88th Division, where the enemy had concentrated every available unit to block our thrust toward Imola, all of the 98th Grenadier Division was now available to oppose the new drive to the north.

In the next attack, beginning at 0600, 5 October, the main emphasis continued to fall east of Highway 65 in the zone of the 85th Division and in particular along the ridge lying between the Idice and Sillaro rivers; but all units pressed north as rapidly as the miserable weather and the stubborn enemy resistance permitted. The rate of advance during 5-9 October was somewhat slower than previously. At the end of the period the center of the line had been pushed forward another three miles, but on the flanks the gains ranged from one to two miles. Along the ridge between the Idice and Sillaro rivers, where the 337th Infantry had made the deepest penetration in the first attack and where the corps plan called for the greatest effort to be made, the line moved forward less than a mile. In addition to the 117th Grenadier Regiment (98th Grenadier Division) on the ridge, elements of both the 362d and 65th Grenadier Divisions were holding positions astride the Idice Valley, and the enemy appeared determined to defend all approaches to Hill 578, the crest of the Monterenzio hill mass lying directly ahead of the 337th Infantry.

Our attacks in this area were all in vain. Along the Idice the 338th Infantry, after relieving the 339th Infantry upon the capture of Mt. Bibele, proved more successful and by the 9th was approaching Mt. delle Formiche, a key bastion in the German third line defense. The situation on the 85th Division front was now reversed, for the left flank had outstripped the right.

Astride Highway 65 the 91st Division introduced the 361st Infantry on the division right and so temporarily had all three regiments in line on 5 October. Loiano and Mt. Bastia fell to the 3d Battalion, 362d Infantry, on the afternoon of the 5th, but three days were then required to wrest Mt. Castellari, two miles to the north, from the fresh 65th Grenadier Division. The next obstacle, the Livergnano escarpment, was the most formidable natural line of defense north of the Gothic Line. Although not as high as the mountains to the south it presented to the attacking troops a sheer rock wall three miles long and in places nearly 1500 feet high. From the rim the enemy commanded every approach from the south; above the rim automatic weapons sited on a lateral series of hills could place fire on any troops who should reach the high plateau. To the east across a narrow gorge formed by Zena Creek lay Mt. delle Formiche in the 85th Division zone, and to the west the enemy defenses were tied in with the Monterumici hill mass in the 34th Division zone. Only two breaks occur in the escarpment: at Livergnano where Highway 65 cuts through, and one and one-half miles to the east above the village of Bigallo. During the night of 9-10 October the 361st Infantry made a preliminary attack on both these breaks, but the stiffness of the enemy opposition indicated that the forthcoming battle for the Livergnano escarpment would be as difficult as any yet encountered by the 91st Division.

To the left the 34th Division, after the capture of Mt. Venere, had been faced with the dual problem of continuing its drive northward to keep pace with the advance of the 91st Division and of protecting its increasingly extended left flank. Clearing the left flank to the Setta Valley was entrusted to the 168th Infantry and the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron while the main effort of the division was directed north to the Monterumici hill mass. Guarded on the east and south by a deep gorge and escarpment formed by Savena Creek and tributary streams feeding into the Savena and Setta valleys, Monterumici loomed up like a massive fortress before our troops, and by the 9th the division

was only at its outpost line of defenses, the 135th Infantry on the south and the 133d Infantry on the west. The steady rains and the lack of good roads caused much difficulty in supply; by 8 October no less than 744 men—clerks, mechanics, garrison prisoners, antiaircraft artillerymen—were being used to keep open the trail along the Mt. del Galleto-Mt. Venere ridge.

On the right flank of II Corps the 88th Division was able to employ more of its strength as 13 Corps took over the Mt. Battaglia-Mt. Cappello features on 2-7 October. At the end of the 4th the 349th Infantry had been maneuvering for an attack on Hill 587, a mile to the north of Sassoleone. North of Hill 587 the high ground divides into two ridges, one running to the northwest through Il Falchetto Hill and the other stretching due north through Mt. delle Tombe. Fresh troops from the 98th Grenadier Division had relieved the battered remnants of the 44th Grenadier Division in the area and put up a stubborn fight. Only after an encircling attack had gained the ridge just short of Il Falchetto Hill on the night of 6-7 October did the enemy pull back from Hill 587; Mt. delle Tombe still remained in German hands at nightfall on the 9th. The 351st Infantry, which had become entirely available for the second corps attack, pushed up to the near vicinity of Gesso on the right, but the enemy garrison, armed with flamethrowers, repelled an attack on the village on the 9th.

To achieve these gains along the II Corps front during 5-9 October the four infantry divisions suffered 1,474 battle casualties as contrasted with 1,734 battle casualties in the first October attack. The pace of the offensive had been slowed down considerably, both by the fresh enemy troops and also by the weather, which continued rainy and foggy. If the fog and mist in isolated instances aided our troops in achieving surprise, they greatly increased the problems of coordination between attacking units and prevented the exploitation of local successes. Finally, with each mile that the troops advanced over the rain-soaked trails and dirt roads the problem of keeping supplies moving forward increased in geometric proportion. By the 9th the possibility of a swift thrust to the Po Valley appeared remote.

To make matters yet worse II Corps on 10 October faced an enemy delaying line which was stronger in natural defenses than either of the two which had just been broken. From west to east it included the Monterumici hill mass in the 34th Division zone,

the Livergnano escarpment opposite the 91st Division, Mt. delle Formiche and the Monterenzio hill mass opposite the 85th Division, and Mt. delle Tombe and the Gesso ridge facing the 88th Division. II Corps planned to attack all of these points, placing its main effort again in the zone of the 85th Division with the 91st Division assisting in the capture of Mt. delle Formiche and the 88th Division clearing the east side of the Sillaro Valley to provide flank protection. In an effort to build up reserves for a new phase scheduled to start about 15 October, Combat Command A, consisting of the 6th and 14th Armored Infantry Battalions, was detached from the 88th Division and attached to the 34th Division; on corps order the 1st Armored Division (less Combat Command B) would take command of the 34th Division zone, and the latter would shift two regiments east of Highway 65.<sup>6</sup>

The highest of the terrain features in the chain of enemy defenses stretching east and west through Livergnano was Mt. delle Formiche, a bald-crested height topped by a tower which provided observation as far west as Highway 65 and east across the Idice Valley. Characteristic of the confused nature of the German forces at any one point in his line of defenses was the fact that the mountain was held by elements of three divisions. Against this force the 2d Battalion, 338th Infantry, pushed up from Casa del Monte and seized the crest by the afternoon of the 11th. Then the 3d Battalion spent three days in advancing less than a mile down the north slopes of the mountain; in the early days of the October offensive the enemy had staged a withdrawal after losing control of a prepared defensive position, but now he contested every foot of ground. On the other side of the Idice Valley the 337th Infantry, with the 1st Battalion, 338th Infantry, attached, continued its efforts to reach Hill 578, the high point of the Monterenzio hill mass and finally took the point with tank support at noon on 13 October. Enemy elements engaged had included troops from the 98th, 65th, 44th, and 362d Grenadier Divisions. The 339th Infantry relieved the 337th Infantry on the following night and pushed forward a mile beyond Hill 578.

On the morning of 10 October, when the new corps attack was launched, the assault of the 91st Division on the Livergnano escarpment was already under way. The plan of General Livesay called for the 361st Infantry to continue its efforts to outflank

Livernano and then shift gradually to the west to pinch out the 362d Infantry; the 363d Infantry, resting since the 6th, would enter the line on the right to assist in the attack on Mt. delle Formiche and to assume responsibility for the eastern portion of the 361st Infantry zone. The stiff resistance met by the 2d Battalion, 361st Infantry, during the night of 9-10 October indicated that all of the strength of the 363d Infantry would be needed. The enemy was fighting from excellent defensive terrain, and his order of battle was better integrated than in the 85th Division zone, consisting chiefly of elements from the 65th Grenadier Division and paratroopers. In contrast to most of the units facing II Corps the 65th Grenadier Division had suffered comparatively few casualties.

Activity of the 91st Division on the 10th was largely devoted to an effort to rescue Company K, 361st Infantry, which had been trapped in Livernano the previous night. These efforts failed, and almost the entire company was taken prisoner; the 2d Battalion, which had reached a point near the top of the escarpment north of Bigallo, was barely able to maintain its foothold. One company was fully engaged in protecting the trail through the gap, handpacking supplies, and carrying out the wounded. To bring a wounded man down off the escarpment required twelve hours. On the 11th the 363d Infantry moved up and after dark launched a night attack, in which the 1st Battalion reached the top of the escarpment east of the 361st Infantry and the 3d Battalion gained Hill 504 to the west. On the west of Livernano the 1st Battalion, 361st Infantry, also made a night attack to outflank the village, but the small group which reached the escarpment north of the village was driven back by tank and heavy-caliber mortar fire; the only success here was the clearing of the caves above Livernano which had afforded excellent protection for the enemy.

In the next two days the cumulative effort of our artillery fire, bombing, and infantry attacks began to produce results. The 91st Division Artillery alone fired 24,000 rounds during the three-day period 12-14 October. Fair weather, which continued almost uninterruptedly for four days after 10 October, made possible the first extended period of observed artillery fire since the fighting in the Gothic Line and again permitted Rover Joe to operate efficiently. Before the attack on the 11th, for instance, nine air missions had been flown, some within 350 yards of the

forward troops. Beginning on 13 October enemy resistance decreased, as the 361st and 363d Infantry slowly drove ahead. The Germans evacuated Livergnano on the afternoon of the 14th, and by the next day the 91st Division had an east-west line approximately a mile north of the village. Enemy resistance then became determined again, and his artillery fire, especially from self-propelled guns, was unusually heavy. Although the Germans had lost their strongest delaying positions north of Futa Pass, there still remained several miles of terrain favorable to the defense.

In the II Corps plan for the third October attack the 88th Division was instructed to make its main effort on the left along the Sillaro Valley. During the first two phases of the offensive the 85th Division had outstripped the 88th Division; now the latter was to catch up and so aid the assault on the Monterenzio hill mass as well as possibly a drive to the northeast toward Castel San Pietro in the Po Plain. The mission of bringing up the division left flank was assigned to the 350th Infantry, resting as much as it could in the miserable weather since its relief on Mt. Battaglia; and on the morning of the 10th the regiment passed through the 349th Infantry on Il Falchetto Hill and Hill 587. Although the 1st Battalion failed to gain Mt. delle Tombe, the 2d Battalion, crossing the Sillaro west of Hill 339 on the night of 13-14 October, found a gap in the enemy defenses. It had cut through by the 14th to Hill 373 and by dark on the 15th was over a mile north of the Sillaro, abreast of the 85th Division. On the rest of the division front action was limited to the renewed efforts of the 351st Infantry to take the Gesso ridge, which fell on the 12th.

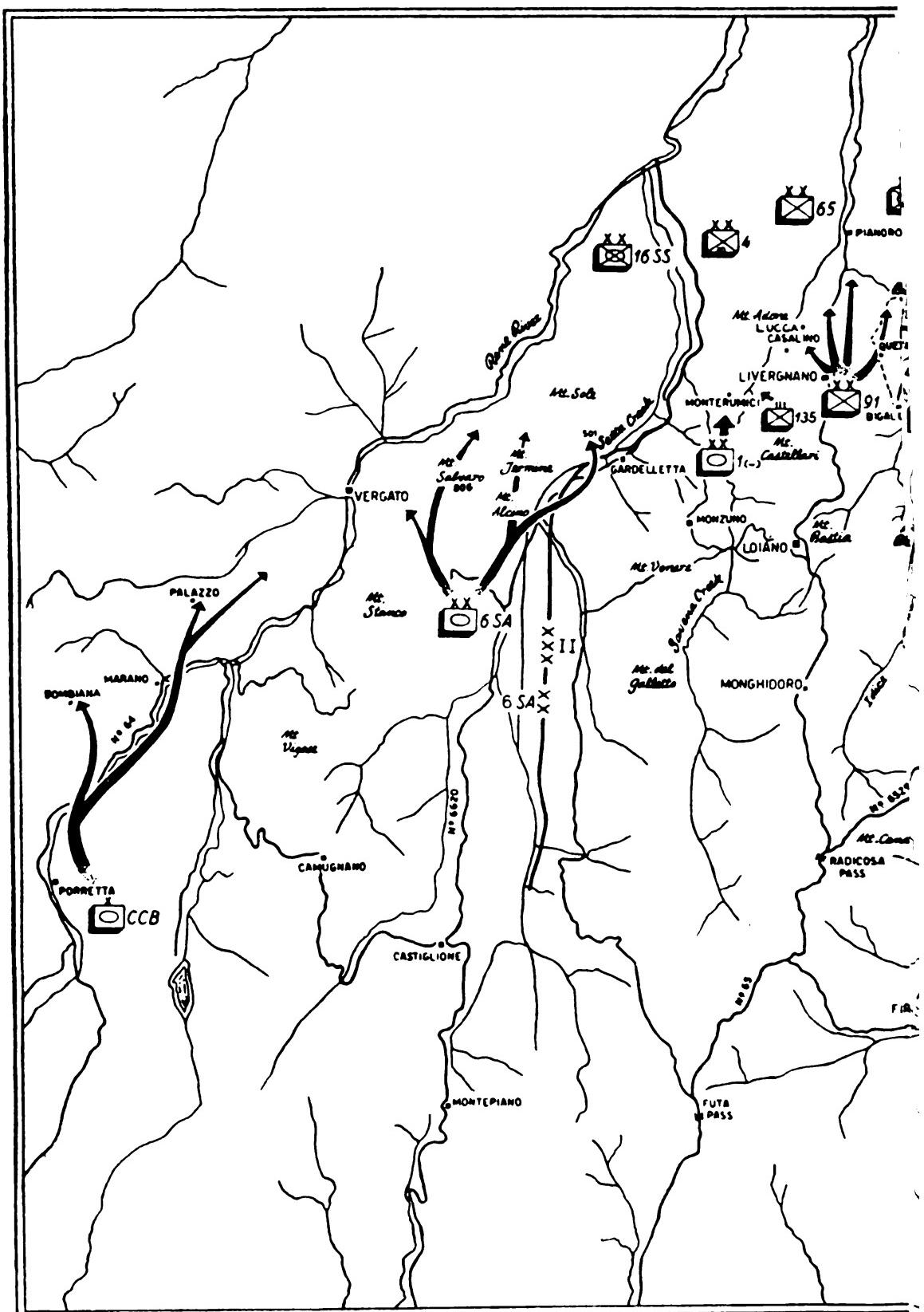
Along the entire II Corps front the smallest gains were made by the 34th Division, struggling to take the Monterumici hill mass and at the same time assemble two regiments for action east of Highway 65. After a combined effort of the 133d and 135th Infantry failed on the 10th, the 6th and 14th Armored Infantry Battalions took the place of the 133d Infantry west of the hill mass on the following night; in the next three days the 168th and 133d Infantry shifted to the east of Highway 65 to Mt. delle Formiche and Barbarolo. The 135th Infantry continued its attacks on Monterumici, essaying a thrust from east of Savena Creek which necessitated moving the 91st Division boundary to the east; but the efforts of the regiment put it only up to the

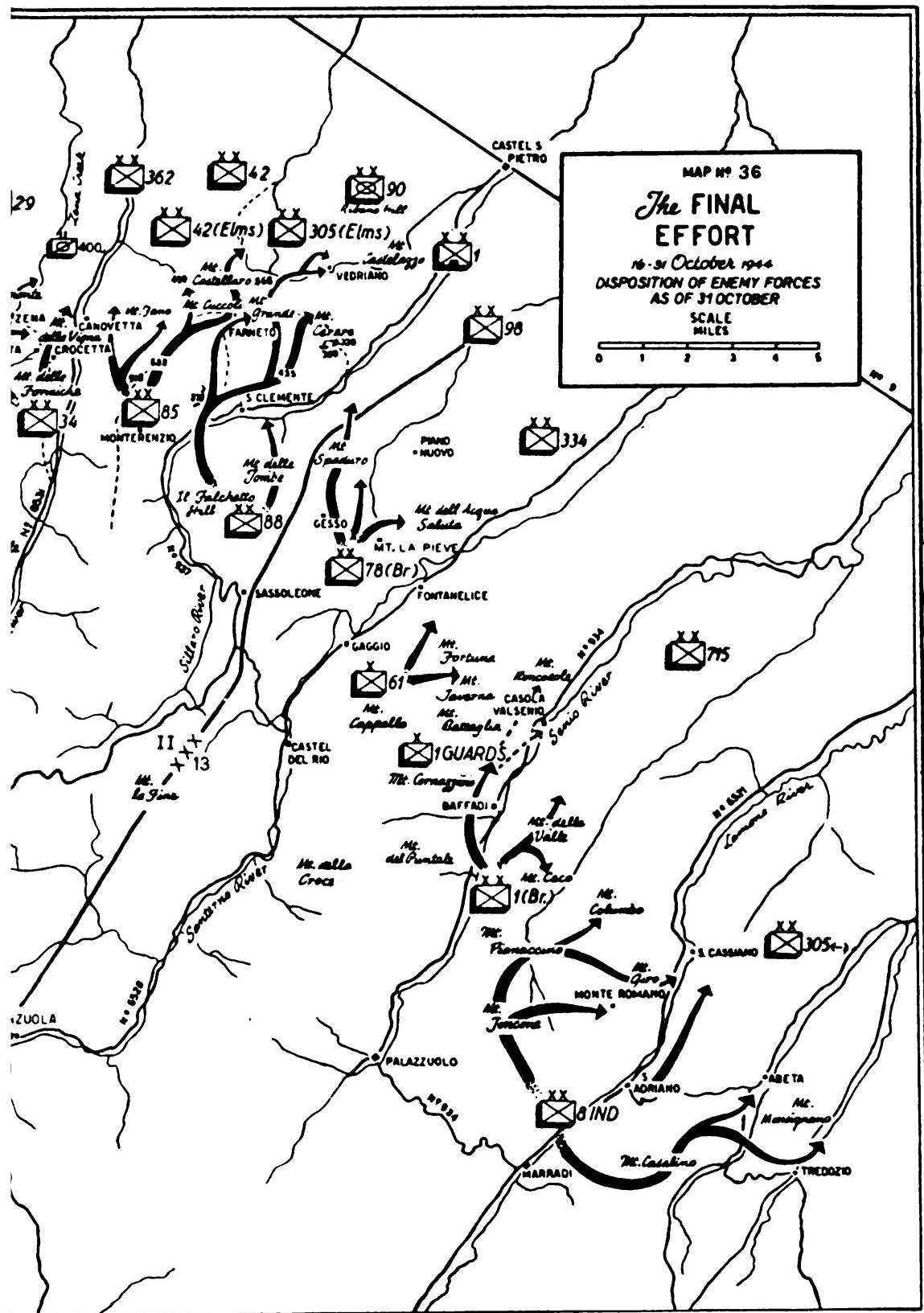
gorge formed by the creek. The 135th Infantry and Combat Command A passed to the 1st Armored Division at 1200, 14 October.

The attacks on 10-15 October were characterized by the heaviest fighting experienced by II Corps since the breach of the Gothic Line at Il Giogo Pass. The four divisions of II Corps had suffered a total of 2,491 battle casualties; with these added to the 3,208 in the period 1-9 October, our losses became alarming. Although the bulk of the losses was made up by men returning to duty and by replacements, a serious shortage of replacements was developing in the theater, particularly in the category of junior officers where the casualty rate was disproportionately high. Battlefield commissions granted to qualified enlisted men only partially alleviated the situation as the supply of experienced noncommissioned officers was almost equally low. In some instances the shortage of officers extended to the field grades; of the nine infantry battalions in the 88th Division only four were commanded by lieutenant colonels on 15 October. It was evident that if the heavy casualties continued the fighting efficiency of the attacking divisions would soon be seriously impaired.

Not only were personnel replacements scarce, but unit replacements were impossible. Outside of rotating the front-line regiments within each division, no reserves could be created. If Fifth Army had had only one of the divisions which it had lost in the summer, not to mention all the troops that had gone to France, our drive through the Apennines would have progressed much more rapidly.

Measured in terms of ground gained the third phase recorded a slowing down of the offensive. With the exception of a three-mile advance by the 350th Infantry, which brought the left flank of the 88th Division abreast of the 85th Division, the average for the corps front was between one and two miles; and on the left flank, where the enemy still held the Monterumici hill mass, the front remained almost stationary. Even the achievement of having broken through the strongest of the enemy's delaying lines was tempered by the fact that the forward troops were still approximately 13 miles from Bologna. Though the enemy was suffering heavy losses as well, especially in the clear weather prevailing to the 15th, yet he exhibited an amazing resourcefulness in putting together odds and ends to maintain a front, and his





artillery fire was becoming ever heavier and more devastating. Also Marshal Kesselring was shifting more and more strength to the II Corps front. In addition to the 4th Parachute, 362d Grenadier, 44th Grenadier, and 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Divisions, the 65th and 98th Grenadier Divisions were fully committed before 10 October, one regiment of the 94th Grenadier Division was identified on the 85th Division front on the 13th, and one regiment of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division appeared north of Livergnano at the end of the period. If this trend continued, the enemy would soon have as many troops in the line as II Corps.

## 7. THE FINAL EFFORT

16-28 October 1944

The race between the advance of II Corps on the one side and the enemy build-up and the worsening weather on the other was becoming very close by the 15th. On the previous day the Army G-4 reported to General Clark that the supply of ammunition available in the theater would soon be reduced to a critical level. He estimated that if the current daily expenditure of ammunition was continued the Army would be forced to adopt a defensive role by 10 November. Battle casualties, fatigue, lack of adequate replacements, an approaching reduction in artillery allotments, and the fall rains, together with the steady arrival of enemy reinforcements, made necessary an early decision. With two regiments of the 34th Division concentrated east of Highway 65 to add weight to the attack in the center II Corps was ready on 16 October to make the final effort to reach the Po Plain, ten miles away.

The confused nature of the enemy's order of battle opposite the 85th Division and the capture of the dominating height of Mt. delle Formiche suggested the possibility that this area would prove a weak point in the enemy defenses. Here accordingly the 34th Division was to attack, take Mt. Belmonte, and drive down the Idice Valley to cut Highway 9. (See Map 36.) The 85th Division would assist the attack and then turn east, as would the 88th Division on its right after taking Mt. Grande. The 91st and 1st Armored Divisions would continue their efforts astride and west of Highway 65 with Mt. Adone as primary objective. Although the initial direction of the corps attack was to the north, the shift of the 34th Division east of Highway 65 and the zones

allotted to the divisions on the right flank aimed at a breakthrough to the Po Valley southeast of Bologna.

For the attack north of Mt. delle Formiche, where II Corps was making its major bid for victory, the 34th Division employed the 168th and 133d Infantry abreast, the latter on the left. The attack began on the 16th; three days later the 34th Division held Mt. delle Vigna but not Mt. Belmonte. Enemy artillery and mortars were matching the fire of the 34th Division round for round; instead of finding a weak point in the enemy defenses we were facing the tanks and infantry of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, one of the best German units in Italy. The attack by the 91st Division on the left used all three regiments, but gains were limited to an additional mile north of Livergnano. Like the 34th Division, the units on either side of Highway 65 were experiencing difficulty in getting antitank guns and armor forward to support the infantry even with the aid of prime movers, oxen, and bulldozers.

By the 19th neither the 91st Division nor the 1st Armored Division was yet in position to assault Mt. Adone. In addition to a marked increase in the use of tanks and self-propelled guns the volume of fire laid down by the enemy artillery had more than doubled from that experienced in September. The heaviest fire was concentrated on Livergnano, which the enemy set out to demolish systematically in an effort to block the flow of supplies along Highway 65. Faced with the danger of a possible counterattack in force by the 16th SS and 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions and unable to achieve a significant breach at any point in the enemy lines, the 91st and 1st Armored Divisions by 19 October had shifted gradually from the offensive to what was in effect an aggressive defense.

On the right of the 34th Division the story was a little better. The 85th Division made some gains in the high ground east of the Idice; the 88th Division by the 19th was drawing close to Mt. Grande and held Mt. delle Tombe. Once again 13 Corps had been directed to shift its boundary to the north, this time by taking over the Gesso ridge and by attacking for Mt. Spaduro; the effect of this shift, completed late on the 16th, was to reduce considerably the zone of the 88th Division and release additional forces for its attack.

The failure of the 34th Division and of the units flanking it in the center of the II Corps front to make appreciable gains in

the period 16-19 October forced a modification of the plan of attack. The strength of Monterumici and Mt. Adone discouraged further attacks in the nose of the corps salient, but by striking to widen the flanks of the salient we might be able to reduce the concentration of enemy forces. The first step in this plan called for the 88th Division on the right flank, aided by the 337th Infantry, to take Mt. Grande and Mt. Cerere, the high point on a spur to the southeast of Mt. Grande. Meanwhile the 34th Division would continue its efforts to seize Mt. Belmonte, and the 91st Division would improve its positions on the east side of Savena Creek. In the second phase the emphasis would be placed on developing the enemy defenses in the central area and below Mt. Adone; in the third phase an attack would be launched to take Mt. Adone and Pianoro in the 91st Division zone, thereby broadening the corps front to the west as well as to the east. The 88th Division would be relieved by 13 Corps after the fall of Mt. Grande, and would pass into corps reserve near Highway 65.

Even before the II Corps orders were issued, the development of the enemy defenses in the Mt. Grande area was approaching the final stage. During the 19th 158 fighter-bomber sorties saturated the area with high explosive and fuel tank incendiary bombs, striking targets which the 88th Division Artillery marked with colored smoke. Division and corps artillery pounded the area from Mt. Cuccoli east to Mt. Cerere during 1700-1800, firing 8,100 rounds in the hour with the aid of tanks and tank destroyers. Immediately after the artillery concentrations the 349th Infantry attacked north; by dawn of the 20th the 1st Battalion was on Mt. Cerere and the 2d Battalion on Mt. Grande—twenty-four hours earlier than either II Corps or the enemy had anticipated. The ease of our success was explained partly by the fact that hitherto the principal fighting had occurred along the ridge stretching west from Mt. Grande into the zone of the 85th Division. In this area both the 339th and 350th Infantry had been heavily engaged for two days before the attack on Mt. Grande, and the 350th Infantry did not gain Mt. Cuccoli and the village of Farneto until dark of the 20th. The capture of Mt. Grande, like that of Mt. Battaglia in September, represented a serious tactical loss to the enemy, who was being reinforced by the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division from the Eighth Army front; but a similar series of counterattacks did not develop, thanks at least in part to the efforts of fighter-bombers, which on 20-21

October bombed and strafed all approaches to the Mt. Grande area, and also to corps and division artillery, which carried out an extensive program of harassing fires.

While the 88th Division, assisted by the 85th Division, was seizing and then consolidating its hold on Mt. Grande, the rest of the II Corps front remained virtually static, so the second and third phases of the attack were abandoned in favor of expanding the bulge northeast of Mt. Grande. The main effort was now made by the 88th and 85th Divisions, assisted on the right by 13 Corps, to drive northeast three miles to the Mt. Castelazzo-Ribano Hill line, three miles from Highway 9 and the last possible defensive line short of the Po Valley. To provide forces for exploitation to Highway 9 and to guard against a counterattack on the corps left, the 362d and 363d Infantry were drawn out of the line on Highway 65, where the 135th Infantry was attached to the 91st Division.

The first part of the attack began on the night of 22-23 October and reached a line approximately one mile north of Mt. Grande, including Hill 568 and Mt. Castellaro. Despite counter-attacks the 351st Infantry pushed on during the next night east from Hill 568 toward the hamlet of Vedriano. Company G found a gap in the enemy lines and infiltrated into the village itself; the rest of the battalion was held up, and during the day of the 24th the encircled company was wiped out. Renewal of the attack on the night of 24-25 October brought practically no gains. Dark clouds clinging to the mountains made it difficult for troops to call for accurate artillery support; cold rain and mud added to the misery of the infantrymen already approaching the point of exhaustion. After dark on the 25th the 351st Infantry made one last effort to take Vedriano, but the attacking force, made up largely of fresh replacements, disintegrated in the rain and fog. A German counterattack then wiped out two companies.

At other points around the Mt. Grande salient the remainder of the 88th Division and the 85th Division were in no better condition to continue the attack. Plans of using the reserve 362d Infantry were ended by the torrential rains on the 26th, when a flash flood took out all the bridges across the Sillaro River and so prevented movement of the regiment north of the stream. Division engineers constructed a breeches buoy at one point and put across several footbridges, but all transport was tied up south of the river. Ammunition and rations had to be hand carried

to reach the troops on the north bank. Once across the swollen river supplies had to be moved over washed-out jeep trails to reach Mt. Grande, and from there only mules could reach the forward troops. In view of the situation General Keyes on the afternoon of 26 October issued verbal orders to the 85th and 88th Divisions to pull back to defensible ground and dig in.

The sudden bogging down of the II Corps offensive on the 26th was due to more basic causes than a flash flood or the loss of individual units. In the past II Corps had demonstrated repeatedly that bridges could be rebuilt in a matter of hours and units re-formed after a few days of rest; what could not be restored overnight was the offensive power of divisions which were under strength and worn down from more than six weeks of bitter fighting. At the end of each phase of the October offensive the balance had leaned more heavily in favor of the enemy. Only the hope that one more attack would carry them through the last few miles of mountains separating them from the Po Valley had kept our troops from halting earlier.

The clearest picture of the relative weakness of II Corps at the end of the offensive may be obtained from the casualties suffered by the four infantry divisions which had borne the brunt of the fighting. From the start of the offensive on 10 September through 26 October the 34th, 85th, 88th, and 91st Divisions sustained a total of 15,716 battle casualties. The 88th Division, which spearheaded the last attack from Mt. Grande, alone had suffered 5,026 casualties; at the end of the month this division was under strength by 1,243 officers and men. In an effort to relieve the shortage of replacements 3,000 men were flown to Italy from France, but due to the stormy weather during the last week of October these troops arrived too late to take part in the attack from Mt. Grande.

The effect of the heavy casualties was felt most seriously by the rifle companies, upon whom fell the brunt of the fighting. In many instances a company attacked with only two or three officers. Platoons were often at half strength and made up to a large extent of replacements who had been with the unit for only a few days. Furthermore the troops were tired to a point of exhaustion. To the burden of carrying machine guns and mortars up the steep mountain slopes were added clinging mud, rain, and the bitter-cold nights of approaching winter weather. The issue of improved winter clothing left the troops better pre-

pared for the inclement weather than in the previous winter, but there was no possibility of keeping dry during an attack when the rains lasted for days on end. Under such conditions even the strongest men reached the limit of their physical endurance, and the number of non-battle casualties rose steadily.

In contrast to the steady drain on the strength of the attacking units, the enemy troops facing II Corps received a stream of reinforcements. To the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, which bolstered the central portion of the front at the middle of October, there were added on the II Corps right flank the whole of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, elements of the 305th Grenadier and 42d Light Divisions, and finally the 1st Parachute Division. When II Corps had opened its attack on the Gothic Line it was faced by one full division and elements of two others; at the end of October this force had grown to seven divisions, and elements of three others. Some of these divisions, such as the 4th Parachute and the 44th and 362d Grenadier Divisions, had been nearly annihilated, but the enemy provided sufficient replacements to keep them functioning, and they had the advantage of fighting from prepared positions. II Corps estimated that by the end of October the enemy had as many, and possibly more, infantry troops with which to hold the line as we had available for the attack. Over all, Fifth Army had been opposed by seven divisions at the beginning of the offensive in September; by the end of October this number had increased to 16.

In artillery as well as in infantry the enemy had reached a basis of equality with II Corps. There was also a change evident in the way the enemy employed his artillery fire. Heretofore the majority of his missions were observed, the expenditure of ammunition was controlled by higher headquarters, and when his pieces were counterbattered they moved to alternate positions. In October the enemy supply of ammunition appeared to be plentiful, and no restrictions were placed on its use. Very little fire was directed toward rear installations or supply lines; instead, most of the fire was placed on forward troops in concentrations seldom experienced before. II Corps on the other hand had been forced by the last week in October to impose drastic restrictions on ammunition for medium-caliber weapons, and it had no heavy artillery available after the 17th, when the 697th and 698th Field Artillery Battalions (240mm howitzer) were detached and sent to France.

When II Corps issued written instructions on the 28th calling for all divisions under the corps command to develop defensive positions, the attack of Fifth Army was virtually ended. Into the II Corps salient the Army had poured the bulk of its offensive troops and supporting weapons, together with the overwhelming majority of its air support; if the spearhead of Fifth Army could advance no farther, the units on either side could not be expected to do better. During October, indeed, 13 Corps on the right and the 6 South African Armoured Division on the left had all they could do to keep up with the flanks of II Corps and so protect the main drive. 13 Corps had four divisions, but the right flank of the corps remained anchored below Highway 67 and its left flank was ever extended, first by relieving the 88th Division on the Mt. Battaglia-Mt. Cappello features and then again by taking over the Gesso ridge. The fall rains, which bogged down the four-wheeled British trucks more quickly than American transport, provided an additional limitation on offensive operations.

Throughout the month 13 Corps had launched attacks south of the Santerno Valley which resulted in the occupation of additional hills and mountain villages, but the tactical value of the ground occupied was of less importance than the advantage to the main Army attack of keeping the 334th, 715th, and 305th Grenadier Divisions pinned down. In the last drive 13 Corps had made more extended efforts to assist the attack on Mt. Grande. On the 19th the 78 Division sent its 36 Brigade eastward against Mt. dell' Acqua Salata and the 38 Brigade northward against Mt. Spaduro. The former peak was tenaciously held by the 334th Grenadier Division throughout our attacks down to the 26th, when rains stopped the effort. The 38 Brigade at first took but failed to hold Mt. Spaduro; then, reinforced by the 11 Brigade, it consolidated the summit on the night of 23-24 October. The 6 Armoured Division in the Mt. Cappello-Mt. Battaglia area after the 18th, the 1 Division astride the Senio, and the 8 Indian Division on to Highway 67, where one armored brigade remained in the line, made slight advances which aided chiefly in improving 13 Corps positions.

After 5 October the 6 South African Armoured Division on the left of II Corps was under direct Army control and concentrated its efforts on pushing up Setta Creek toward the Reno River. Each peak in the ridge on the west side of the creek north

from Mt. Vigese to Mt. Sole meant a more or less protracted battle; Mt. Vigese fell on the 6th, Mt. Stanco after a bitter fight on the 13th, and Mt. Salvaro on the 23d. Division plans now called for the 24 Guards Brigade to attack Mt. Sole, three miles west of Monterumici, but Setta Creek flooded on the 26th and so prevented the effort. To the left of this drive Combat Command B, under South African control, pushed up Highway 64 to Palazzo, seven miles beyond Porretta, by the 29th.

Along the rest of the Army front west to the sea IV Corps had by the end of September penetrated only the southern fringe of the great mountain mass lying north of the Arno Plain. Ahead lay miles of jagged peaks and narrow twisting valleys more rugged than anything met in the II Corps zone. With the exception of the narrow coastal plain beyond Viareggio the only means of access to the north was along the valleys formed by the Serchio River, Lima Creek, and the Reno River. By controlling these lines of communication the enemy could hold his long right flank with a minimum of forces. Similarly Fifth Army maintained only sufficient troops on the IV Corps front to protect its vital supply lines from Leghorn and to prevent, so far as possible, the transfer of enemy troops to the II Corps front. Action in October accordingly was minor, and in fact IV Corps was not able to keep the enemy before it pinned down. During the month the 65th Grenadier, 94th Grenadier, and 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Divisions shifted east to the II Corps front, and by the end of October only second-class units faced IV Corps—the 148th Grenadier Division, the Italian Monte Rosa Alpine Division, and the 232d Grenadier Division from west to east on a 50-mile front.

On our side, by the end of October, Task Force 92 under Maj. Gen. Edward M. Almond, commanding the 92d Division, held the coastal zone with the 370th Infantry and two antiaircraft artillery battalions; the 6th Combat Team (BEF) was in the Serchio Valley; and the 107th Antiaircraft Artillery Group, composed of British antiaircraft artillery units, guarded the Cutigliano sector on Highway 12. After the loss of Combat Command B and the 6 South African Armoured Division, IV Corps was reduced to the strength of no more than a reinforced division.

The major attack of the month on the corps front was made by Task Force 92 when it strove to take Mt. Cauala, the first of a series of heights guarding the approach to Massa. This offen-

sive got under way on the 6th and continued in vain until the 12th; finally on the night of 17-18 October elements gained the crest of Mt. Cauala for the third time and held it, but efforts to continue the attack failed. In the Serchio Valley zone the 6th Combat Team (BEF) made steady progress along the high ground on each side of the river in the early part of the month, but on the 9th the advance was slowed on corps order. There was a danger that if the Serchio Valley thrust gained too much momentum the enemy would counterattack, and IV Corps had no reserves. In most instances the advances thereafter were carried out in order to keep contact with the enemy rather than to gain ground. The three-mile advance made at the end of the month was due largely to the poor opposition offered by the Monte Rosa Division; many of the Italians deserted and others showed little inclination to fight. In several areas along the IV Corps front the shortage of transportation and engineer units prevented our occupation of territory left undefended by the enemy.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER IX

<sup>1</sup>On 2 September, after crossing the Arno, the 442d Infantry was relieved by the 349th Infantry. The 442d Regimental Combat Team, with the 100th Battalion from Task Force 45, then prepared for shipment to France.

<sup>2</sup>At 0300, 17 September, Army time changed from B Time, two hours ahead of Greenwich Standard Time, to A Time, one hour ahead of Greenwich Standard Time.

<sup>3</sup>Dismounted tank crews from the 760th Tank Battalion, which had been used to guard the long exposed right flank of the 88th Division, were strengthened from the 26th by the 14th Armored Infantry Battalion; on the 28th the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion was also committed to guard the supply route to the 350th Infantry.

<sup>4</sup>Task Force 92 consisted first of the 370th Infantry and Combat Command B under Brig. Gen. John S. Wood, assistant division commander of the 92d Division, and then of the 370th Infantry alone. It may be noted that Task Force 45 was by this time only of regimental strength.

<sup>5</sup>A system of air-ground support borrowed from Eighth Army and set up at the beginning of the Gothic Line drive to deal with targets needing immediate neutralization. Forward observation posts—Rover Joe—established with front-line divisions were manned by experienced air and ground personnel, who directed the Spitfires or P-47s to their targets by radio; by this system air attacks could be made well within the bomb safety line and in some instances within twenty minutes of the call for air support by the infantry.

<sup>6</sup>On 12 October XXII Tactical Air Command directed a massive air attack designed to destroy the enemy's supply dumps in the Bologna area and to disrupt his lines of communication. A total of 1661 tons of bombs was dropped on 74 targets by 750 heavy bombers, 300 medium bombers, and 277 fighter-bombers.

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## CHAPTER X

# THE SECOND WINTER

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### 1. SETTLING DOWN FOR THE WINTER

28 October-31 December 1944

WITH the arrival of November Fifth Army troops were preparing to dig in for a second winter on the cold, wind-swept slopes of the Italian mountains. For nearly two full months they had struggled forward from mountain to mountain in a campaign which for intensity and sustained action matched any fought by an Allied army. Beginning in the warm, clear days of early September when the Allied forces were confident of an early end to the war in Europe, the Fifth Army drive toward Bologna had breached the Gothic Line by 18 September and swept on to Radicosa Pass by the 28th. A side thrust by the 88th Division toward Imola having been stopped in the bitter struggle of Mt. Battaglia, the main drive to the north continued in early October past Monghidoro, past Loiano, and on to the Livergnano escarpment. But our push gradually slowed to a halt amidst the torrential rains of late October as the strain of heavy casualties, increasing enemy resistance, and mud-clogged supply routes wore down the offensive strength of the attacking divisions. Barely nine airline miles from Bologna in the center and four miles from the Po Valley on the right flank the forward troops of Fifth Army could see their objectives when the drive was stopped.

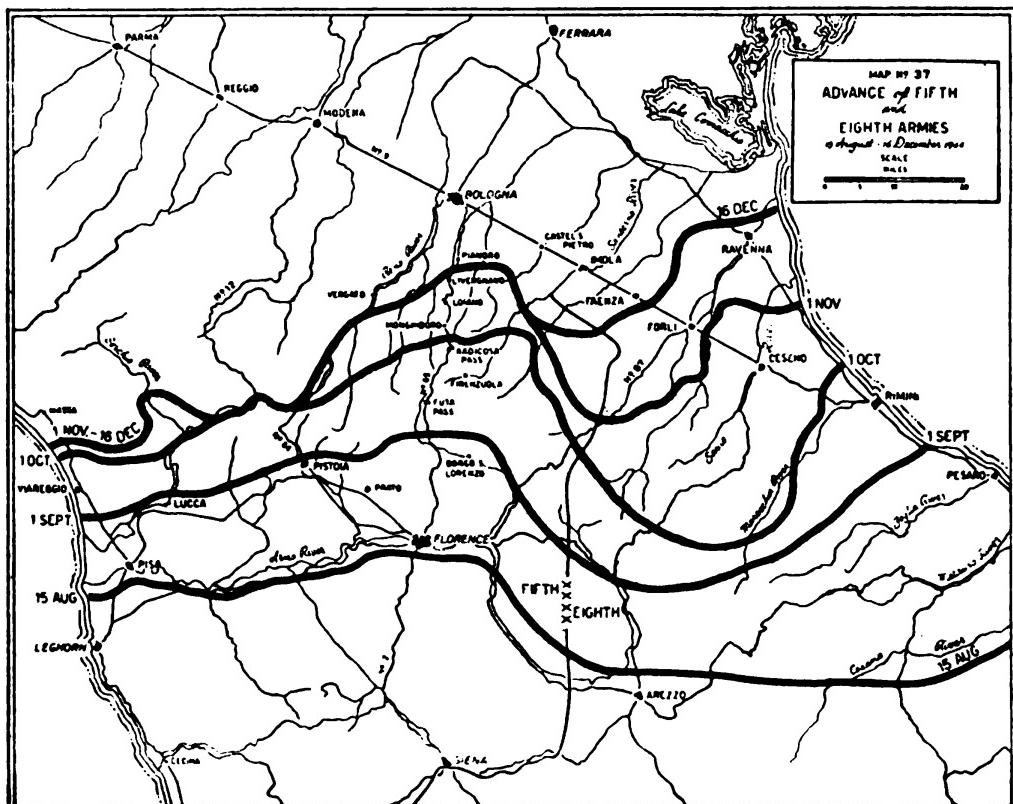
On 28 October General Keyes of II Corps had ordered the establishment of a main line of resistance running northwest across the Sillaro River from Mt. Spaduro in the 13 Corps sector to Mt. Cerere, the eastern bastion of Mt. Grande; then around Mt. Grande to include Hill 568 and Mt. Castellaro, the northern guardians of the hill mass; west along the northern slopes of Mt. Fano and Mt. Belmonte, the key features in the central area; and finally southwest below Mt. Adone and the Monterumici hill mass to tie in with the 6 South African Armoured Division in the Setta Valley. Possession of Mt. Grande and of Mt. Belmonte, which was captured by the 133d Infantry on 23 October, gave II Corps possession of the commanding heights in the area lying east of Highway 65; west of the highway, where the enemy

still held Mt. Adone, the Monterumici hill mass, and Mt. Sole, the advantage was reversed.

Two days later General Clark issued verbal orders to his entire command which directed regrouping all along the 130-mile front of Fifth Army and preparation for a new attack about 1 December. In compliance with these directives 13 Corps relieved the right elements of II Corps on Mt. Grande and Mt. Cerere during 2-9 November. The reduction in its sector allowed II Corps to withdraw a large portion of its tired command to rest centers established in the Arno Valley; on 1 December the 88th, 34th, and 1st Armored Divisions were holding the corps front while the 85th and 91st Divisions, earmarked for major roles in the next attack, were carrying out a strenuous training program in the rear. To the left IV Corps again took command of the 6 South African Armoured Division on 4 November, but relinquished the coastal sector and the Serchio Valley to the 92d Division, now committed in its entirety under Army control. IV Corps was further strengthened by the commitment of all of the Brazilian 1st Infantry Division under Maj. Gen. João Baptista Mascarenhas de Moraes. The front-line divisions had received 5,000 replacements, but on 1 December Fifth Army divisions were still approximately 7,000 under strength.

Although the weather in December promised no improvement over that of the past month, the importance of pinning down enemy forces in Italy at a time when the German High Command was straining every resource to hold off the Allied drives on the western and eastern fronts led General Alexander, on 28 November, to order a new offensive on the Allied front in Italy. Eighth Army would make the main effort with the initial objective of driving the enemy west of the Santerno River; it would then push on in a more northerly direction to outflank Bologna from the east. (*See Map 37.*) It was anticipated that Eighth Army would reach the Santerno about 7 December. At that date Fifth Army would join the attack if the weather permitted and if the offensive on the right was going favorably.

In its new attack Eighth Army made some progress, particularly north past Ravenna near the Adriatic coast; but the drive northwest along Highway 9 continued at a slow pace against tenacious German delaying actions. Although the enemy had been compelled in October to move a large part of his forces back to face Fifth Army, the rainy weather had turned the Po Plain



into a quagmire, and crossing each stream thereafter had been a major operation. By 7 December Eighth Army had not reached the Santerno. The weather continued to deteriorate; ground conditions in the mountains, already bad, became such that mechanized movement off the roads was almost impossible. With our forces and those of the enemy so nearly equal in number, it was considered essential that a minimum of three days of good flying weather be assured to enable the use of our great air superiority in support of the ground attack. Since weather forecasters were unable to foresee such a period with any degree of certainty, the signal to begin the assault was delayed. The majority of Fifth Army troops were placed on 72-hour alert, and efforts were bent toward improving defensive positions and getting ready for the winter. Snow had already fallen several times and was shortly due in increasing frequency.

Actually Fifth Army was not to fight another winter campaign. Plans might be made, preparations might be carried out, but always a postponement interrupted the execution of the plans. The strategical conditions which had forced the Allies in Italy to fight at Cassino and Anzio the previous winter no longer existed, for the main front was now along the Rhine. Allied

forces there might have to keep up the offensive throughout the bitter winter, but those in Italy could rest for a while until the better weather of spring made mountain campaigning again feasible. Or, to be more accurate, the troops in the Apennines might rest so far as the enemy artillery and the duties of maintaining the front permitted, for the winter was certainly neither pleasant nor restful in a forward foxhole. Strategically, the only requirement was that the Allied armies in Italy continue to pin down the great bulk of the German forces in the peninsula; since the enemy seemed desirous of holding the Po Valley as long as possible, this mission required only occasional small attacks and constant probing of his lines.

Exhaustion of the troops, the weather, the shortage of replacements, the strength of the enemy forces marshalled against II Corps—all were contributing factors in the initial decision to halt the attack and thereafter in the failure to renew it; the controlling factor throughout was the status of ammunition stocks available to Fifth Army. On 14 October the Army G-4 had estimated that the theater supply would be exhausted by 10 November if the average daily rate of expenditure were continued. Four days later, after the decision was made to hold back an eight-day reserve to repel a possible enemy counteroffensive, the Army G-4 estimated that the offensive could not be continued beyond 25 October. Although the lack of ammunition had not yet been felt seriously, this estimate corresponded closely with the actual date when the II Corps offensive broke down. By placing restrictions as early as the 19th on all units not engaged in the attack from Mt. Grande, the Army ended the month of October with a small reserve of ammunition, but the very reduced theater allocations for the period 10 November-10 January meant that it would take time to build up the reserves necessary to support even limited objective attacks. In some categories, such as ammunition for the 155mm gun, production capacity in the United States was unable to meet the demand; in other categories the higher priority granted to the European Theater of Operations resulted in the reduced allocations.

Shortly before 1 December an analysis of ammunition stocks indicated that sufficient supplies were on hand to support a 13-day attack during December. Such consumption, however, would result in inability to carry out further offensive action until after 28 January 1945; then receipt of scheduled allocations would

again boost the dump supply to a point which would allow full artillery support. With the decision to postpone the Fifth Army attack came a great reduction in allotments of ammunition to the corps, and daily restrictions of 15 rounds per 105mm howitzer, 18 rounds per 155mm howitzer, and 11 rounds per 155mm gun were imposed. Later in the winter, when the offensive was cancelled, the allocations were further reduced so as to build up ample reserves for the spring.

While Fifth Army was still waiting for Eighth Army to close up to the Santerno before launching its own effort, the Allied command in Italy was radically changed. Marshal Wilson relinquished command of the theater to become head of the British military mission in the United States, and Marshal Alexander took his place as theater commander. General Clark left Fifth Army at 1200, 16 December, to command 15th Army Group, as AAI was henceforth designated. To lead Fifth Army Lt. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., came back to Italy. General Truscott, it will be remembered, had led the 3d Division in the battles up the Volturno and at Anzio, and then had taken over VI Corps during the most critical period at the beachhead. As commander of VI Corps he had participated in the invasion of southern France and had been slated to command Fifteenth Army before his return to Fifth Army in Italy.<sup>1</sup>

The new Army command was almost immediately faced with a situation which appeared to have possibilities of some danger. Evidences of a build-up of German forces opposite the thinly held western sector of the Army front were detected and confirmed by the middle of December, and had to be weighed in the light of a new German counteroffensive then under way in France and Belgium, the Battle of the Bulge, the success of which might conceivably inspire counterattacks on other fronts. The 148th Grenadier Division and elements of the Italian Monte Rosa and San Marco Divisions were already in the western sector, and there were some indications that the 157th Mountain Division might be moving to that vicinity; reliefs effected by the enemy in other parts of the Fifth Army sector and on the Eighth Army front might make it possible to free three other divisions, the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier, the 26th Panzer, and the 5th Mountain Divisions, to back an attack toward the vital base of Leghorn.

Though the capacities of the enemy to effect any rapid large-scale movements were limited, it was decided on 23 December to

reinforce the 92d Division in the coastal-Serchio Valley sector with two brigades of the 8 Indian Division and with two regimental combat teams of the 85th Division. In addition to these forces the 84th Chemical Battalion, the 755th and 760th Tank Battalions, and five artillery battalions were detached from II Corps and ordered to the vicinity of Lucca. The remaining combat team of the 85th Division, the 338th, was held in readiness to repel counterattacks in the 1st Armored and 91st Division zones when II Corps began its winter offensive, now scheduled about Christmas night. By Christmas Day both the 19 and 21 Indian Brigades had closed in the area around Lucca. IV Corps was placed in command of the 92d Division sector, and the 6 South African Armoured Division reverted to Army control.

Following probing thrusts by his patrols on the night of 25 December, the enemy early on the 26th launched several limited attacks in the rugged mountains on a six-mile front astride the Serchio River. The valley attacks were accompanied by a marked increase in artillery fires along the coast, but no additional action developed in that sector. West of the river Italian and German elements hit the 1st Battalion, 370th Infantry; east of the river larger units from the 148th Grenadier Division attacked the villages of Sommocolonia, Tiglio, and Bebbio, where the 2d Battalion, 366th Infantry, and other elements attached to the 370th Regimental Combat Team held outposts.<sup>2</sup> Our forces on both sides of the river gave ground, and elements of the 366th Infantry broke in utter disorganization, leaving a gap along the river and forcing a general withdrawal in the afternoon of the 26th. The following day the Germans renewed their attack, with the chief weight on the east bank, and drove our troops from their second defensive line in the afternoon.

By this time the 19 Indian Brigade had moved up behind the 92d Division, and the elements of the latter still in front of the Indians passed back through by dark. At 2200 Indian patrols made contact with the Germans, and on the following day the enemy began to retire. During the last days of the month the Indians pushed back up the Serchio, aided by heavy efforts of XXII Tactical Air Command; by the end of the year the lost positions had been almost entirely restored. The object of the German attack was not clear, though one officer prisoner said it was a reconnaissance in force which might have been exploited had not our reinforcements been encountered. Approximately

five battalions had been involved, including 1,000 Germans and 300 Italians.

Whatever the enemy's intentions had been in the Serchio Valley attack, it contributed to the decision further to postpone the projected push against Bologna. On 28 December Fifth Army announced postponement of the assault and placed all Army troops on a nine days' alert for resumption of offensive operations in case the enemy should decide to pull out of Italy. IV Corps was directed to protect the Leghorn supply base at all costs, II Corps was to hold its positions, and 13 Corps was to continue affording assistance to Eighth Army wherever possible, though indeed the attack of that force was by now virtually ended. The 1st Armored Division, which had moved to Lucca on the 26th, remained there in Army reserve; the 135th Regimental Combat Team, which had hastened to the vicinity of Viareggio, returned to its parent 34th Division. At the end of the year the Fifth Army front lines were essentially the same as on 26 October. Everywhere the Italian winter held the front in its icy grip with heavy snows covering all the higher mountains and often blanketing the lower hills as well. For the next two months action was to be much as it had been in the last two: patrol clashes, artillery exchanges, and local attacks by either the Germans or our troops to improve positions and to test the alertness of the other side.

## 2. LIFE IN THE MOUNTAINS

The static front did not mean a cessation in the soldiers' activities; for a great part of the Army, indeed, life went on much the same in attack or in defense. To gain a correct picture of Fifth Army one must visualize it not as a thin fighting line but as a zone up to 50 miles deep slowly advancing up the Italian Peninsula—an armored borer, as it were, with a steel cutting edge fed and kept going by a great mass of machinery. Although one's attention is naturally drawn to the scene of battle, it can never be forgotten that the infantrymen of the rifle companies who actually fought on the front formed less than a fourth of the Army's strength, and that most of the Army operated and lived well beyond the range of enemy light artillery. During the lull the men of the Army continued to eat, to use and wear out their clothing and equipment, to fire ammunition of all types at the enemy, to fall sick or suffer hospitalizing wounds; and so all the

rear-echelon installations of Fifth Army continued to operate at normal speed and with the normal load. If the pressure of supporting an attack was reduced, the Army was on the other hand preparing for a new offensive in the spring; and the work of repair and salvage from the previous attack was extensive.

Throughout its entire operations in Italy Fifth Army had more varied supply and service functions and responsibilities than had ever been considered the task of a field army before the war began. It was unique among American armies in this respect, and many lessons learned in Italy were put to good advantage in other theaters. A trip along the main supply routes of Fifth Army or a visit to some of its installations would have revealed a mechanized army, highly specialized, greatly skilled, and at the same time remarkably flexible. During the winter, for instance, ordnance set up a huge shop dubbed "Willow Run" for the complete rebuilding of trucks and jeeps. The Army quartermaster employed Italian civilians to make its own items of non-standard winter clothing and operated its own soap factory in addition to monopolizing the product of a china factory for the Army rest centers. The volume of signal traffic handled both by Army and by its subdivisions almost matched civilian loads, switchboards at Army headquarters alone averaging 19,000 calls per day during the winter.

The mechanization and the supply levels of Fifth Army are the more remarkable when one reflects that the Army was at the end of a supply line approximately 5,000 miles long, with forward elements in the rough Italian Apennine Mountains in the dead of winter. Practically the entire needs of Fifth Army had to be supplied by shipments from home together with field expedients developed by all echelons, for there were few resources to exploit in Italy. Surface convoys from the United States delivered their supplies to Peninsular Base Section at either Naples or Leghorn, from which points it was the responsibility of Base and the Transportation Corps to deposit them in Army dumps, located around Lucca, Pistoia, and Florence, the latter 50-75 miles from Leghorn. Items delivered at Naples were shipped by rail to the north, and by March 1945 rail lines were open from Leghorn to Florence; but much of the burden of supply fell on the trucks even in the rear areas.<sup>3</sup>

From the major supply points in the Arno Valley trucks ground their way slowly up the steep grades and around the curves on Highway 65 for nearly 50 miles to reach the forward elements

of II Corps. At the end of our Gothic Line drive the supply system in the forward areas was heavily strained. Overcrowding of Highway 65, which was supplying all four divisions of II Corps in October, a gradual breakdown in the supply line due to the overworking of the trucks, and torrential rains had helped to bring the drive toward Bologna to a halt. In the mountains standard cargo trucks could go only short distances off the main roads. From the truckheads jeeps crawled and splashed in low gear, low range, along narrow, twisting trails to the foot of the higher peaks. Beyond these jeep trails it was necessary for mules and men to pack food and ammunition on to the fighting elements; during the winter Fifth Army had no less than 15 Italian pack-mule companies with a strength of approximately 3,875 animals. At times in the early winter units were cut off by raging torrents, and were forced to resort to many expedients to keep themselves supplied. Rubber boats were used to ferry supplies across the streams; when the current was too swift for such frail craft, aerial tramways were rigged, along which buckets containing food and ammunition were pulled. At the end of the supply pipeline the mighty flood pouring through the ports dwindled to a trickle, just adequate to keep up the front-line troops.

During the winter stalemate engineers strove valiantly to combat the obstacles raised by nature. Often they were on the losing end; slowly, however, they made headway in their struggles. While the process of defeating the mountains was a long one, after more than two months of strenuous effort improvements could be seen. Construction of revetments and the installation of scores of culverts began to produce results in a decreasing number of slides and washouts. The first snowfall of the season covered the higher mountains on 11 November; four days later two inches of snow and rain deluged the Apennines, and the real winter had arrived. The use of chains on vehicles, constant work by snowplows, and the almost never-ending hand labor by thousands of soldiers and civilians kept the roads open. Not only did the roads remain passable, but they were greatly improved. Up Highway 65 a steady stream of equipment, food and clothing moved forward over Futa Pass and into the hands of the combat troops.<sup>4</sup> Depleted stocks were refilled, and reserves slowly began to be accumulated. To compensate for the unusually severe fall and early winter weather, spring came exceptionally early; by mid-February the snow was largely off the mountains and roads.

Emphasis was also placed on the rehabilitation of the Army's equipment, a task which was hampered by the low priority of the Mediterranean Theater as regarded new supplies from the United States. Supply discipline was emphasized in an effort to make the troops care for what they already had; as far as possible the Army "lived on its fat" by repairing and salvaging old equipment. The ordnance units were kept busy all winter rebuilding old and wrecked vehicles. By February the supply dumps had been restored to the desired levels, and it became possible to withdraw simultaneously the equivalent of two truck battalions for complete overhaul of their equipment. Repair and some allocations from the United States eliminated practically all shortages in transportation by the end of March. The salvage repair and collection program continued unabated all winter, not only for vehicles but for every other article of equipment. Although mountain snows at times hindered the work, gangs of soldiers and civilians swept their way through most of the old Gothic Line positions and bivouacs to recover any articles left behind. February collections from all sources, including old material turned in by Army organizations, at times reached as high as 30 truckloads a day. Most of this salvage was sent to Florence, where 1,400 civilians were employed in sorting and repairing tentage, clothing, mess equipment, and any other light items which could be put back into condition for further use.

Throughout the winter Fifth Army thus prepared its physical equipment and its lines of communication for a spring offensive. At the same time it was necessary to prepare the personnel for the forthcoming attack, both physically and mentally. The morale of the troops had to be maintained at a satisfactory level during a winter in which most of the men lived in the high, cold mountains. For many men it was the second winter spent in Italy in far from comfortable circumstances, and the fact that the Italian front seemed to have been relegated to a secondary status did not serve to buoy the spirits. Large numbers of troops had been overseas for extended periods of time. That the soldiers keenly felt these factors was indicated in the increase in the number of courts-martial cases, which soared especially among the veteran divisions.

Long before the decision was made to postpone large-scale offensive operations until better weather conditions could be expected in the spring, extensive steps had been taken to prepare the command for winter in the mountains. In the Winter Line

and at Cassino Fifth Army troops had fought in a mixture of cold, rain and snow; the next winter's battles occurred in much the same type of terrain and in colder weather with more snow and less rain. But in contrast to the situation of the previous year the Army was incomparably better prepared for the bad weather. New and improved types of clothing were on hand, this time at the beginning of the winter. The issue of shoepacs, combat trousers and jackets, and better sleeping bags and the regular exchange of clean socks issued with the rations kept the troops warmer and drier; buildings and dugouts were utilized to the utmost for shelter, though the men in extreme forward positions usually were forced to remain in foxholes.

To give as many men as possible a brief rest period in more pleasant quarters the system of rest centers was greatly expanded during the winter. The idea of rest centers, new to American armies, had proved highly successful at Caserta, Sorrento, and Capri in the winter of 1943-44, was carried out on a much greater scale in Rome, and was developed to large proportions in the Arno Valley. Hundreds of thousands of troops were rotated through the rest and leave centers set up in the railroad station at Florence and at the watering place of Montecatini. Here the men could forget the rigors and dangers of the front line, sleep in a bed, take baths, visit places of historical interest, and generally indulge in the pleasures and entertainments of civilization, if only for a brief period. At Montecatini an Army-sponsored liquor warehouse, grossing an average of \$300,000 per month, served a double purpose by enabling the men to purchase liquor at lower rates than in the open market and also assuring that no poisonous liquors were consumed.

Wherever they were during the war, American soldiers retained their native traits and habits, and special efforts were made during the holiday season to recreate the customs of Christmas. In the 15 days preceding Christmas Army post offices received 2,675 pouches and 48,383 sacks of mail for distribution by Christmas Day, and all units were issued turkey for Christmas and New Year's Day. Even the troops in the foxholes and those quartered in the old stone farmhouses near the front managed to brighten up the appearance of their surroundings for Christmas. II Corps provided the finishing touch. High on Radicosa Pass where the wind swept across the summits of the Apennines and the snow piled deep into drifts, corps engineers anchored a

40-foot tree, complete with strings of colored lights and a lighted sign reading "Merry Xmas." The tree was far enough behind the front to be on the friendly side of the light line, and military police stood by ready to extinguish the illumination whenever hostile planes appeared in the sky. The climax of the holiday attractions was the Spaghetti Bowl football game between opposing teams representing Fifth Army and Twelfth Air Force, played on New Year's Day in the municipal stadium at Florence before approximately 25,000 service men and women.

By such measures, together with efforts to educate soldiers on the place of the Italian campaign in the war as a whole,<sup>5</sup> the morale of the Army was maintained at a satisfactory point. Life at the front still remained miserable, and men continued to die in the winter stalemate; for the enemy artillery was much more active than in the previous winter, and patrols were always necessary. But the number who fell sick was much reduced. As of 31 January 1945 a total of 1,200 trenchfoot cases had been reported for six divisions; this figure stood at 3,046 on 31 January 1944 and had included only five divisions. Respiratory diseases were remarkably low as well; only infectious hepatitis or jaundice proved difficult to control. A typhoid epidemic which swept parts of the Arno Valley did not touch the Army, and the venereal rate was substantially reduced.

During the winter each major unit of Fifth Army was out of the line for a period of at least four weeks, which was devoted to intensive training. Men had to be trained in new techniques and weapons and refreshed on old ones—a process which never ended as long as the Army was in combat. Thousands of replacements had to be integrated into the weary divisions which had borne the brunt of the Gothic Line fighting. Complete retraining of some units was necessary to prepare them for new types of work; a large percentage of Army service units was reorganized. Here again Fifth Army and the Mediterranean Theater had to rely mainly upon their own resources. The 366th Infantry had been formed by the theater from troops of other branches; on 14 January 1945 Fifth Army activated the 473d Infantry from the personnel of the former Task Force 45, a step which forced the disbandment of the 45th Antiaircraft Artillery Brigade, the 2d Armored Group, and the 434th, 435th, 532d, and 900th Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalions.<sup>6</sup> The theater instituted a program of converting troops of other arms

into infantry replacements and of sending suitable infantry and other enlisted men to local officer candidate schools so as to create more infantry officers. Together with a midwinter increase in replacements from home this program allowed the building-up of all under-strength units and even the assignment of an over-strength for the next drive.

Some new units were obtained from outside the theater. The first elements of the 10th Mountain Division arrived in Italy on 27 December, and the entire division was ashore slightly more than two weeks later. The 86th Mountain Infantry relieved the antiaircraft units of Task Force 45 on 9 January 1945 northwest of Pistoia; by the 28th the entire division under Maj. Gen. George P. Hays had been placed in the task force to gain combat experience in a rugged, but fairly quiet sector of the line.

In March several reinforcements arrived in preparation for the final spring offensive. American artillery strength was increased until by mid-April, in addition to the organic artillery in the divisions, 6 battalions of 155mm howitzers, 4 battalions of 155mm guns, 2 battalions of 8-inch howitzers, and 1 battalion of self-propelled 105mm howitzers were available. In addition to five regiments (battalions) of British artillery ranging from 8-inch guns and 240mm howitzers to 4.5-inch guns, six separate tank battalions and five tank destroyer battalions could be utilized further to increase the Army's fire power. Late in March the 442d Infantry with attached units returned from France; and the Legnano Group, an Italian infantry unit about two-thirds the size of an American division, was assigned to Fifth Army. This unit was one of five combat groups of the new Italian army which had been formed, trained, and outfitted by the British.

### 3. PREPARATIONS FOR THE LAST ATTACK

1 January–31 March 1945

In the early part of the winter emphasis had been laid on rebuilding the Army after its fight in the mountains before Bologna. In the new year the activity of Fifth Army was pointed toward the next offensive. The repair of the roads and of equipment, the restoration of morale, the training of old troops and the conditioning of new units—all were in preparation for the next, and last attack. In September 1944 Fifth Army had launched what was then hoped to be the final drive, but the enemy had stopped

us; against all rational calculation he was still holding in northern Italy, though the German lines elsewhere in Europe were fast crumbling under the combined blows of the Americans, British, and Russians in the spring of 1945. Evidently one more push was required of Fifth Army to overthrow the enemy forces before us.

Rumors were current at various times during the winter months that the Germans intended to evacuate all of Italy, that they would evacuate only the western half, or that they would retire north and northeast to the line of the Po and Ticino rivers. No evidence was uncovered to substantiate these reports, and as the spring drew near increased vigilance by the enemy along the entire front line indicated that he was not likely to move at all unless forced to do so. Northern Italy provided the forces occupying it with nearly all the necessities of life and warfare. When continued bombing by Allied aircraft smashed much of the industrial areas, many manufacturing plants were moved underground into huge caves where they continued to produce relatively large quantities of munitions, and Italian farmers raised sufficient food to meet German needs.<sup>7</sup> Northern Italy, indeed, was rapidly becoming the only sizable manufacturing area outside Germany still unoccupied by the Allied armies.

Another possible factor governing the German decision to remain in Italy was the mere difficulty in getting out. The first enemy units to leave Italy, the 44th, 71st, and 356th Grenadier Divisions, departed in November–early January without much apparent trouble, but the continued program by our air force of rail and road interdiction and the destruction of large quantities of enemy rolling stock created a situation whereby between three and four weeks were required to move the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division over the Brenner Pass into Germany in February, and an equally long period was needed to pull the 715th Grenadier Division out of the country in March.

Despite these losses Marshal Kesselring and then General Vietinghoff, who succeeded him as commander of Army Group Southwest in the early spring, still retained 23 German divisions in the country, among them some of the best units remaining in the enemy's armed forces. In addition the Fascist Italian formations had by now been increased to the equivalent of six divisions. Of these 29 German and Italian divisions, 19 were on the front, 9 opposite Fifth Army under Fourteenth Army, commanded by General Lemelsen, and 8 opposite Eighth Army under

Tenth Army, now commanded by Lt. Gen. Traugott Herr. The only two panzer grenadier divisions remaining in Italy, the 29th and 90th, were held in Army Group reserve in the vicinity of Bologna ready to reinforce the enemy on either the Fifth Army or Eighth Army fronts. The Germans thus were faced with an alarming weakness of capable reserves. Neither army had reserves of its own, and the two divisions, mobile though they were, were scarcely adequate for a front 130 miles long. The remaining ten enemy divisions in Italy were tied down either on the Franco-Italian frontier under the Army of Liguria or were guarding the rear areas against the ever-increasing threat of the partisans.

On 1 April Allied intelligence officers estimated that a minimum of 50,000 well organized patriots were either already engaged in sabotaging and harassing the enemy or ready to spring into action on a given signal. Aided by Allied liaison officers who were parachuted into the country or smuggled through the German lines, the partisans had formed themselves into battalions, brigades, and even divisions. They were armed with weapons stolen or captured from the Germans or dropped to them by Allied aircraft, which delivered more than 500 tons of supplies to these behind-the-lines fighters during March. The constant threat of partisan attack forced the Germans to employ thousands of their own troops and most of the Fascist forces in a campaign against the guerrillas, while heavy guards had constantly to be maintained over most of the rear area installations.

The main worry, however, of the German command was the rapidly worsening condition of its transportation system, the lack of vehicles and motor fuel, and the interdiction of railroad supply lines by Allied air power. Bombing of factories and railroads to Germany made it almost impossible to obtain new motor vehicles from the homeland, while the limitation of the Italian automobile output, coupled with incessant bombing and strafing attacks by our tactical aircraft, reduced enemy military transport to a progressively lower level. To augment his scanty supply the enemy commandeered hundreds of civilian passenger cars, trucks, and buses, and substituted horse-and oxen-drawn carts for much motorized equipment. Even more serious was the fact that enemy gasoline supplies were rapidly being reduced to a mere trickle, limiting the use which could be made of the available vehicles. In many cases animals were used to tow vehicles, which started their motors only while passing over steep grades; even in the so-called "fast"

convoys only every third truck operated its engine and towed two others.

The program of interdiction of lines of communication carried on by our air forces imposed ever greater difficulties on the enemy as the spring weather improved. Fighter-bombers roved over and behind the enemy lines by day and by night, attacking rail yards, roads, bridges, and dumps, interdicting the Po River crossings, and shooting up enemy convoys. Medium and heavy bombers kept the Brenner Line cut in at least one place every day throughout February, and in two places in March.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless the Germans were able to keep some traffic moving. At times they constructed removable railroad bridges which could be hidden during the daytime and installed at night; another trick consisted of painting the railroad bed to give the impression that craters blocked the line. Concentration of spare equipment and the maintenance of large crews of workmen to make rapid repairs proved the best defense, while transshipment of passengers and supplies around the blocked sections of the Brenner Line allowed limited use to be made of this route. On the whole the enemy was able to meet most of his requirements other than vehicles and gasoline by shipments from Germany and by economy in the winter stalemate. A sufficient amount of food, clothing, and ammunition was available, and the morale of the enemy soldiers remained surprisingly high.

The inactive months provided the Germans with an excellent opportunity to carry out their usual methodical organization of the ground. By 1 April the defenses guarding Bologna had been heavily built up south, southeast, and east of the city and to a lesser extent on the southwest; additional belts of prepared fortifications rested on the river barriers of the Po and the Adige. The main line of resistance protecting the city, known as the Genghis Khan Line, began on the Fifth Army front west of Vergato, crossed the Reno River, ran over the guardian peaks of Mt. Sole and Mt. Adone in the area between Highway 64 and Highway 65, and continued east of the latter road along the mountain tops north of Mt. Belmonte and Mt. Grande until it reached the Senio River. (*See Map 37.*) Facing Eighth Army in this sector, east of Bologna, the enemy line swung northward, following the course of the Senio across the lower Po Valley, and finally struck the southern shore of Lake Comacchio.

To provide positions for delaying actions back to the Po, most

of the cities and towns along Highway 9 were prepared for defense by the construction of road blocks and pillboxes. The Po defense line itself ran along the main river from Ferrara west to its junction with the Ticino, from which point the enemy apparently planned to defend along the Ticino, giving up Turin but retaining Milan. (*See Map 38.*) By mid-January photo cover showed the defenses well under way, containing many prepared positions for mortars, antitank guns, and field artillery north of the Po while the high, thick levees along the river banks were utilized to the maximum. Trenches and pits for riflemen and machine gunners, protected by barbed wire and well camouflaged, were dug into these flood barriers. Antitank ditches were constructed near Ferrara, Cremona, and Parma. In depth the line extended far north of the river, even Mantua being provided with perimeter defenses when several canals around the city were widened until they became major tank obstacles.

The third and final line, based on the Adige River and the foothills of the Alps, had been under construction since July 1944. Designed to cover the lower southern approach to the Brenner Pass and to hold us back from northeastern Italy, it was anchored on the west by Lake Garda, extended east through Verona, and followed the foothills as far as Vicenza. Low hills which stood up from the valley floor around Padua were included in the system, and strong defenses were also prepared in the area around Venice. The Adige Line in the hands of a determined enemy such as the Germans had proved to be in the past might well have become the most difficult position to crack in the history of the Italian campaign.

Before worrying about either the Po or the Adige lines, however, our command had first to make a decision on the main axis of attack through the remaining stretch of the Northern Apennines so as to reach the Po Plain. This decision had, moreover, to be made well in advance of the actual attack in order to permit the completion of supply preparations and also to allow time for any necessary preliminary tactical operations. The alternatives essentially were Highway 65 and Highway 64; Highway 12, farther to the west and the only other major trans-Apennine road the south end of which was controlled by Fifth Army, was extremely crooked, contained many steep grades, and was mostly in enemy territory.

The direction of the projected main attack was shifted farther to the west as the date for the attack was postponed since the

later the date the assault began the less difficult it would be to operate in the high ground on the left of II Corps and the right of IV Corps. When it was considered possible that an attack might have to be launched in early February in order to prevent withdrawal of additional German troops, weather conditions in the mountains virtually limited the possibilities to a thrust north from Mt. Grande down the Sillaro Valley on the right of II Corps where the ground was lower and snow less likely to interfere with operations. Then, as 15th Army Group decided in January not to launch an offensive until 1 April or later, planning groups began to consider Highways 65 and 64. The former offered the more direct approach, and on this road we were within 12 miles of Bologna, while on Highway 64 our most advanced elements were more than 20 miles from the city. The terrain favored an advance down Highway 65; the road net was the best in the Army sector; and only the bristling array of defenses which the Germans had prepared on all the dominating ground along the highway could be counted as a serious disadvantage.

The Highway 64 route provided another good approach to Bologna through an area which was not as heavily fortified. It held out the possibility of a close envelopment of Bologna from the northwest and also afforded means of supplying five divisions. This road, following the course of the Reno River and partially defiladed from the west much of the distance, was the more protected of the two. The long ridge, however, which formed this defilade extended for approximately 15 miles parallel to the road from the long-contested Mt. Belvedere on the south to Mt. Pigna and Mt. Pero on the north, slightly beyond the German strongpoint of Vergato.<sup>9</sup> This entire ridge line would have to be swept clear of the enemy before the road could be used for much of its length. As on Highway 65 the Mt. Sole area would have to be captured to permit extensive advance down Highway 64.

In addition to these two possibilities a third was discussed, of turning northwest after taking Vergato, moving over into the valley of the Panaro River, and forging down this corridor to capture Modena and envelop Bologna from the west. Such an operation, however, would create a dangerous salient to the northwest and would bring Fifth Army out into the plain almost 20 miles west of Bologna. It was accordingly discarded, and the end decision was to save men and material by putting our emphasis primarily on Highway 64.

To open up this route and also keep the enemy under pressure and off balance, several limited objective attacks were planned for the late winter period. The first of these attacks was opened on 4 February by the 92d Division, which launched successive drives in the mountainous Serchio Valley and up the coastal plain. Initial gains were registered along the Serchio River against the Italian garrison, but German counterattacks by the 11th pushed the 365th and 366th Infantry back essentially to the starting positions. Similar results were recorded in the drive of 8-11 February on the well fortified coast, where the 370th and 371st Infantry, supported by the 758th and 760th Tank Battalions, met stiffer resistance and suffered higher casualties; neither attack forced the enemy to commit any other than local reserves. From the conduct of the attack our command was forced to conclude that the troops of the 92d Division could not be utilized in a serious offensive.

The later attack of the 10th Mountain Division and the Brazilian 1st Division west of Highway 64 on the right flank of IV Corps reflected the preliminary planning for the spring offensive. The newly arrived mountain units were assigned the task of clearing the high ground which dominated the upper sections of Highway 64 from a point opposite Porretta north to points southwest of Vergato, a distance of approximately eight miles. (*See Map 39.*) This attack was begun on 18 February with the scaling of the Serrasiccia-Campiano cliff, an almost sheer 1500-foot rock face; by the 25th our mountain troops had captured Mt. Belvedere (1139 meters) and Mt. della Torraccia in a dashing attack which cost the 232d Grenadier Division heavily. The third mountain in this area, Mt. Castello, was taken by the Brazilians on the right. From these springboards the 10th Mountain Division and the Brazilians continued on to the northeast in a second attack on 3-5 March, which cleared the ground from Mt. Grande d'Aiano to Castelnuovo. This time our forces met chiefly the 114th Light Division and punished it severely, taking approximately 1,200 prisoners.

The success achieved by the 10th Mountain Division pushed the right flank of IV Corps forward almost abreast of the left flank of II Corps, considerably widening the salient Fifth Army had previously cut into the mountain wall of the Northern Apennines. The Germans were also forced to bring in additional troops, including the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division from their tactical

reserve. By 7 March our troops had gained all the ground included in the list of limited objectives, and apparently could continue farther ahead under the momentum they had already created. Since at least another month must pass before the main attack was to begin, General Truscott decided that further advances would overextend the exposed flank and would only serve to center additional enemy attention on this sector, possibly causing the Germans to make a great increase in the amount of prepared defenses west of Highway 64. Positions were consolidated along a series of peaks and ridges which would provide excellent lines of departure later in the spring. From now on, the ground, though still rugged, sloped gradually to the Po Valley, 20 miles away. On the enemy side the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division went back to its reserve positions, and quiet again settled on the Army front.

The end of March saw Fifth Army troops almost completely regrouped in preparation for spring action. Except in the area west of Highway 64, where the 10th Mountain Division and the Brazilians had carved out large-sized gains, the front line was little changed from that which had existed on 1 November. With IV Corps under operational control of Eighth Army from 18 January, the length of the Fifth Army front had been reduced to less than 100 actual ground miles. To hold the line and to make the next attack Fifth Army now had 9 divisions and the equivalent of a tenth under its command: 6 American infantry divisions, 1 Brazilian infantry division, 1 American armored division, 1 South African armored division, and Italian and American infantry troops equal to another division. IV Corps held more than two-thirds of the Army line from the Ligurian Sea to the Reno River with three divisions (92d, 10th Mountain, Brazilian 1st); II Corps had the 1st Armored Division, 34th Division, and 91st Division with the Legnano Group attached in line from the Reno to Mt. Grande. The 88th Division was in II Corps reserve; the 6 South African Armoured Division, reinforced to a total strength of more than 18,000 men, and the 85th Division were in Army reserve.

Eighth Army, after fighting its way around the eastern edge of the Apennines in the previous fall, had advanced up the lower Po Valley as far as the Senio River, about 20 miles southeast of Bologna. To the northeast its line extended along the Adriatic coast north of Ravenna to the southern shore of Lake Comacchio. Withdrawal of troops for service in Greece and Holland during

the winter reduced Eighth Army to seven infantry divisions, one armored division, and three Italian combat groups.

Both of the Allied armies in Italy were rested, and the losses of the previous fall had been replaced. The Fifth Army line, strengthened by constant improvement of defenses throughout the winter months, was held by considerably fewer troops than had been engaged in the battle at the end of October 1944. On 1 April three complete divisions were in rest areas. All divisions were over strength, close to 7,000 men and officers over and above tables of organization having been assigned to combat units. Ammunition dumps bulged with huge quantities of explosives. Food, equipment, and supplies of all types were stocked behind the front. After more than five months of relative inactivity Fifth Army was ready for whatever action the spring of 1945 might bring.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER X

<sup>1</sup>With General Clark went his Chief of Staff, Maj. Gen. Alfred M. Gruenther; the G-1, Col. William C. McMahon; the G-3, Brig. Gen. Donald W. Brann; and the G-4, Brig. Gen. Ralph H. Tate. Brig. Gen. Don E. Carleton became the new Chief of Staff with Col. Edward M. Daniels as G-1; Col. Ben Harrell as G-3; and Col. Edward J. O'Neill as G-4. The Army G-2, Brig. Gen. Edwin B. Howard, and the G-5, Brig. Gen. Edgar E. Hume, remained in their respective positions.

<sup>2</sup>The 366th Infantry had been formed of Negro troops from other branches converted into infantry and attached to the 92d Division. It was later broken up, and its personnel used to form two engineer general service regiments.

<sup>3</sup>Total tonnage handled by rail and truck in February averaged 20,000 to 25,000 tons weekly.

<sup>4</sup>By January Highway 65 could handle 400 vehicles each way every hour past a given point, thanks to rigid control of transportation and traffic through the system of traffic control posts and convoy limitations.

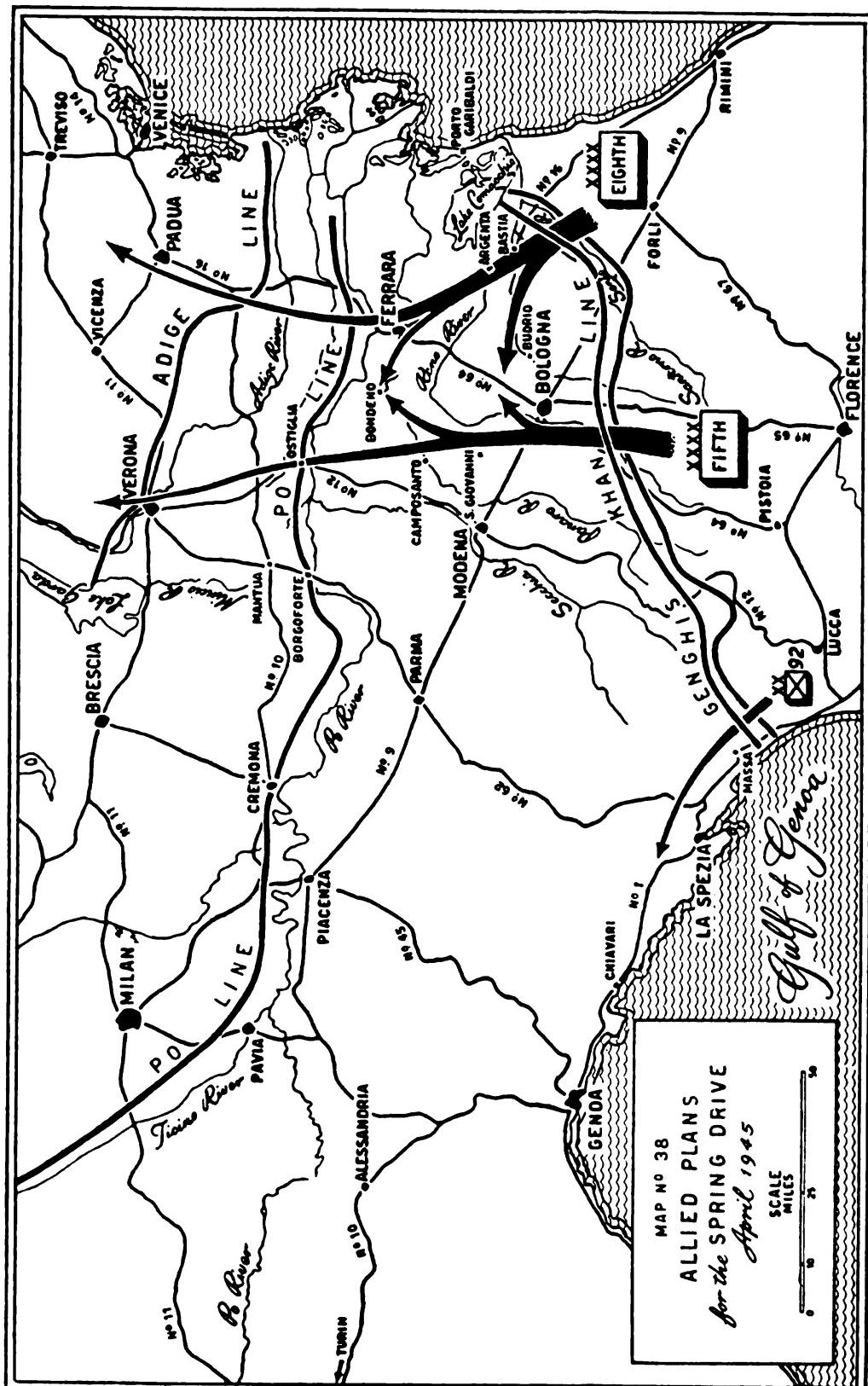
<sup>5</sup>Primary arguments to indicate the importance of the Italian front were the facts that Fifth Army had destroyed more than 200,000 Axis troops since the beginning of the campaign; that the Army, together with Eighth Army, was holding from 24 to 28 first-class German divisions from participation in battles in eastern and western Europe; that we had captured great airfields from which heavy bombers could strike at the heart of German production; and that we had provided bases from which supplies could be shipped and flown to Yugoslavian patriots to aid them in tying up an additional 300,000 German troops.

<sup>6</sup>Antiaircraft personnel were also used to form the 1125th Armored Field Artillery Battalion and the 2695th Technical Supervision Regiment; the 630th AAA Automatic Weapons Battalion became military police, but did not change its name.

<sup>7</sup>The enemy command in Italy also had to justify the campaign in Italy to its troops and did so by quoting such figures as the 321,800 tons of iron and steel shipped to Germany during October 1943-May 1944, the annual export of 140,000 tons of rice and 160,000 tons of fruit, and other statistics indicating the value of north Italy to the German homeland.

<sup>8</sup>The Desert Air Force, supporting Eighth Army, concentrated on the Tarvisio-Udine route. Between them the Desert Air Force and XXII Tactical Air Command claimed 2200 enemy vehicles damaged or destroyed in the Po Valley during February and March.

<sup>9</sup>Task Force 45 had taken and then lost Mt. Belvedere on 24-29 November; on 12 December the Brazilians and elements of Task Force 45 had made another try for the mountain in vain.



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## CHAPTER XI

# TO THE ALPS

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### 1. PLANS AND DIVERSION

1-14 April 1945

**I**N January, 15th Army Group had announced its intention not to launch a full-scale attack until after 1 April, unless the enemy appeared to be withdrawing from Italy. By April the weather would permit campaigning in the mountains, ammunition reserves would have been restored, and both Fifth and Eighth Armies would have several fresh formations at their disposal. It was estimated that by the first of February the Germans had completed preparations for a withdrawal from the line of the Apennines to the Adige River if necessary, but no factual evidence had been received that this plan would be put into effect at any given time. It was expected, therefore, that the enemy would make such a withdrawal only if forced to do so by Allied pressure; the plans of 15th Army Group to smash the enemy forces in Italy were predicated on the assumption that the Germans would hold their present lines as long as they could. By 1945, however, the possibility of an eventual enemy surrender could not be overlooked, and plans were laid to cope with such an event.

The general concept of the spring offensive, as given by General Clark on 12 February, was basically the same as it had been in the fall of 1944, when a drive to bisect northern Italy was to have followed a successful crossing of the Apennines and the debouchment of Fifth Army into the Po Valley. The forthcoming offensive was to be divided into three phases: (I) capture and establishment of a bridgehead around Bologna, (II) development of the Po River positions, and (III) crossing the Po with the object of seizing Verona, sealing the main outlet from Italy—the Brenner Pass—and developing the Adige River positions. Although the operation was divided into three distinct phases, there was strong hope it could be carried out without pause between any of them. The decision to drive straight to the north on the Bologna-Verona axis was expected to cause enemy resistance in western Italy to fall of its own weight, since German and Fascist elements in that section of the country would be forced to retreat north-

eastward in the direction of the Brenner Line before we reached Verona or be cut off against the French Alps, the Swiss frontier, and the forbidding mountains in the narrow section of Italy which bordered on Austria west of the Brenner Pass. In the event of such a withdrawal IV Corps was to take over control of western Italy with forces composed of American, British, Italian, and Brazilian troops. On completion of Phase III it was hoped that bridgeheads could be seized immediately over the Adige River and expanded as far as Padua and Venice, though this result could be achieved only if the enemy did not elect to defend the Adige Line in strength.

On 24 March 15th Army Group issued its detailed orders for the offensive. D-day was set for 10 April (later 9 April), when Eighth Army would jump off in a preliminary drive to clear the plain east of Bologna; Fifth Army would attack later and make the main effort. At the request of General Truscott the definite date of 12 April was later set for the Fifth Army D-day. Phase I called for the breaching of the Santerno River defenses by Eighth Army drives on Budrio, eight miles northeast of Bologna, and on Bastia, located on Highway 16 below Ferrara; Fifth Army would debouch from the mountains into the Po Valley and capture or isolate Bologna. It was felt that the Germans might leave a die-hard garrison in the city to deny us the use of the highway communications through the point, in which event the main drive was to by-pass Bologna and continue on north. Phase II envisioned a breakthrough by either or both armies to encircle German forces south of the Po, Eighth Army blocking the enemy at Ferrara and Bondeno and Fifth Army joining it at either of these two towns. (*See Map 41.*) In a secondary effort Fifth Army would push up the corridor between the Reno and Panaro rivers, seize the crossings over the Panaro River to the west, and then move north again in the corridor between the Panaro and Secchia rivers, striking toward the Po at Ostiglia. The final phase (III) would include both the crossing of the river and the capture of Verona, which might require the use of heavy bridging equipment; but all forces were instructed to make every effort to seize existing bridging and ferrying equipment.

Support by the air force was of critical importance in the success of the spring drive. The enemy was well entrenched and almost on a parity with us as regarded infantry and artillery; only in armor and in air power did we have a clear-cut advantage.

In April 1945 that advantage could be concentrated on the battlefield itself, for the Allied air force had long ago gained mastery of the Italian skies and long-range interdiction of the roads and railroads leading into Italy had been achieved during the early spring. Plans accordingly were drawn up for the utmost employment of air power in close coordination with action on the ground. Before the attack our planes continued their normal activities, interdicting the Po River crossings, destroying enemy motor transport, and harassing enemy supply behind the lines. On the respective D-days for Eighth and Fifth Armies large formations of heavy bombers were to strike the forward enemy areas—the first time these craft had been so used since the days of Anzio and Cassino. While the heavy bombers disrupted the supply lines and struck terror into the enemy, the fighter-bombers and medium bombers would carry out a heavy, sudden blitz against command posts, dumps, gun installations, and all the other vital enemy points which had been catalogued during the previous months of inactivity. Initially tactical air support would be given to Eighth Army, the priority shifting to Fifth Army when the latter opened its attack. Naval support was also planned on each coast, primarily in the form of deceptive measures designed to delude the enemy into believing amphibious landings were about to be undertaken.

In the Fifth Army planning on the basis of these orders, due consideration had to be given to the two entirely different types of terrain ahead of our lines, first the remaining 15 miles of mountains to the Po Valley and then the Valley itself. Initially the spring drive would be a slugging match of the type all too familiar to the men of the Army, but once we had broken through the mountain defenses Fifth Army must be ready to cope with the great problems of shifting rapidly to a swift drive over the flatland. On clear days in the early spring the troops could occasionally see the buildings of Bologna, and when the valley haze dissipated sufficiently the towering peaks of the Alps were visible nearly 100 miles to the north. Although numerous individual mountains and ridges rose between the front lines and the valley itself, all along the II Corps front and in the eastern part of the IV Corps sector the highest portion of the Apennines had been crossed, and the ground ahead sloped gradually toward the plain. Only a few miles of hilly country remained to be traversed before the Army could break out onto the flatlands, find excellent terrain for the employment of armor, and in general reach an area which

would allow flexibility of maneuver such as never before had been encountered in Italy. Whereas distances throughout much of the drive up the Peninsula had been measured in yards, distances in the northern part of the country were often calculated in scores of miles.

The major portion of the region ahead ultimately was included in the watershed of the Po River, the great river of Italy. (See Map 42.) Draining a basin of 26,800 square miles, the river has a valley which extends approximately 200 miles from east to west and measures 60 to 75 miles from north to south. West of Milan the Po Valley merges with the Lombardy Plain, which contains the greatest manufacturing centers of Italy; on the east the flat land continues from Padua in an arc around the northern end of the Adriatic to Trieste.

Everywhere on the level plain, which is highly cultivated and crisscrossed by ditches, there are roads, paved or gravelled. From our lines north Highways 65 and 64 ran into Bologna, where the former ends; Highway 64 continues on to Ferrara, a short distance south of the Po. The main north-south road across the valley in the Army zone was Highway 12, which originates at Pisa in the Arno Valley, crosses the mountains, and strikes Highway 9 at Modena. From Modena this highway continues almost due north across the Po at Ostiglia to the cities of Verona, Trent, and Bolzano, into the Brenner Pass, and eventually on to Austria. To the west Highway 63 cuts northwest across the Apennines from Aulla to Reggio and on to the Po, where it joins Highway 62, which passes through Mantua to Verona. On our far left Highway 1 continued up the coast past La Spezia and Genoa to the French frontier. East and west there are three roughly parallel main arteries in the valley—Highway 9 running along the northern base of the Apennines from Rimini to Piacenza, where it crosses the Po and continues to Milan; Highway 10 along the north bank of the Po from Padua to Cremona, where it crosses to the south bank and carries through Piacenza to Turin; and Highway 11 along the southern foothills of the Alps, connecting Venice, Verona, Milan, and Turin.

Throughout its long course the Po meanders in a series of great bends toward the Adriatic and together with its various tributaries forms an extensive system of obstacles and barriers. In the central section between Piacenza and Ferrara the river is widest, ranging from 1000 feet near Ferrara to 4000 feet at a point north

of Parma, while the actual water width (wet gap) varies between 400 and 1500 feet. East of Ferrara and west of Piacenza the river is narrower, but nowhere can it be spanned by military field-type fixed bridges; during the months of April-June the Po is at its highest stage. Other water obstacles with which Fifth Army would have to deal were the Reno, Panaro, and Secchia Rivers south of the Po; and to the north the Mincio and the Adige. Unlike many of the so-called rivers which had cut across the Army path in southern and central Italy, the streams of the Po Valley are of considerable size, and any of those which drain the Alps might present a considerable crossing problem.

By mid-March Fifth Army had essentially completed its plans for the spring drive. On the west coast the 92d Division was to carry out on D minus 4 a diversionary attack, which had been ordered by 15th Army Group, with the objectives of capturing Massa and exploiting toward the port and former naval base of La Spezia. It was considered possible, but not probable, that this effort would draw in part of the German tactical reserve; since the enemy had only the 29th and 90th Panzer Grenadier Divisions in reserve, commitment of these mobile units presumably would not follow until the enemy command could determine the direction of our main efforts. At the very least, however, the coastal attack would engage the bulk of the 148th Grenadier and Italia Bersaglieri Divisions, holding this sector.

On the main front the emphasis had by now been shifted from Highway 65 to Highway 64 so as to work around the strong enemy defenses south of Bologna. Both II and IV Corps would attack abreast, the chief effort initially astride Highway 64 until the valley of Setta Creek had been cleared and the road junction of Praduro, 15 miles north of Vergato, had been gained. At this time the bulk of the troops would be concentrated west of the highway, ready to break out into the Po Valley between the Reno and Panaro. A minor effort would be made down Highway 65, but positions along this route were expected to fall relatively easily after the dominating high ground west of the road had been taken.

For the operations in the mountains three phase lines, Green, Brown, and Black, were set up as control lines. In the opening Green Phase only IV Corps would attack, sending the Brazilian, 10th Mountain, and 1st Armored Divisions northeast along the ridge west of Highway 64 so as to bring the IV Corps front

up even with that of II Corps. Capture of this area also would screen the building of bridges at Vergato and assist the attack on Mt. Sole in the II Corps zone. During the next two phases II Corps would join the attack through the enemy Genghis Khan Line, using the 6 South African Armoured, 88th, 91st, and 34th Divisions and the Legnano Group. By the time our troops approached Praduro in the Black Phase, reliefs would be under way to permit the assembly of an armored force for further exploitation. The 85th Division would come up from reserve and take over the zone on either side of Highway 64 under II Corps, thereby releasing the 1st Armored Division. The 6 South African Armoured Division would be pinched out by II Corps in the Black Phase, and both armored divisions would come under Army control, prepared to use any available route west of Highway 64 to push into the Po Valley and seize the Panaro River line. The Americans to the west would be pointed roughly at Modena; the South Africans to the east would drive to encircle Bologna and gain contact with Eighth Army at Bondeno. Behind the armor II Corps would be ready to drive north to the Po, protected on its left by IV Corps.

Supply and engineer plans for supporting the attack of the 270,000 men in Fifth Army followed normal procedure for the period of the mountain offensive. Until Bologna was taken and made available for use as a supply base, Fifth Army would maintain itself out of the base dumps which had been built up in the Florence and Pistoia areas. Supplies of ammunition on hand for the beginning of the attack were estimated as being sufficient to support a 45-day sustained offensive, after which our stock of replacements would also be approximately exhausted. Food, ammunition, and gasoline to carry five divisions for three days were stocked by II Corps in forward dumps, and plans were laid for the establishment of similar dumps near Porretta to supply two divisions in the IV Corps attack; these dumps were not opened until our attack began. Beyond Florence and Pistoia supply would be primarily by truck, though use could be made of a gasoline pipeline up Highway 65 as far as Radicosa Pass; even if Genoa were captured rapidly, demolitions, mines, and the shortage of landing craft would not permit much use of the port.<sup>1</sup>

When our forces broke into the valley, supply problems would become extensive. The G-4 section formulated its plans on the premise that a 15-day stock of all types of supply must be built

up in Bologna before operations could be adequately supported farther to the north; it was also assumed that considerable time would elapse between the capture of Bologna on the one hand and the actual crossing of the Po on the other. Once the city was reached Highway 9 was to be developed as the main supply route for IV Corps, moving to the northwest, and Highway 12 for II Corps elements advancing north from Modena and Bologna toward Verona. Areas north and northwest of Bologna were tentatively chosen as future dump sites, and it was estimated that 16,000 tons of Class V supplies, 800 tons of Class I items, 6,000 tons of Class II and IV quartermaster articles, 2,000 tons of Class II and IV engineer equipment, and 5,500 tons of bridging materials would have to be moved into this area. The Highway 65 pipeline would be extended north as rapidly as possible to Bologna. The problems in a mass enemy surrender were also considered by the supply services, and tentative plans made to deal with such an event.

Long study of photographs and maps of the Po resulted in the decision that the best possible crossing sites in the projected Army zone of attack were along a 20-mile stretch of the river extending from Ostiglia on Highway 12 west to Borgoforte, where the highway connecting Mantua and Reggio crossed the Po. Within this section of the river likely sites for assault crossings, ferries, and bridges were selected, and the engineers made careful plans for throwing floating and permanent bridges over the stream. Special emphasis in this planning was laid on the area between San Benedetto Po and Borgoforte, where the marshy ricefields about Ostiglia could be avoided; but a subsequent crossing at this latter site would be necessary to open up Highway 12 to Verona.

Equipment was available in Fifth Army to make a two-division assault crossing, each division employing two combat teams abreast; engineers were also prepared to construct a total of four floating treadways, one floating Bailey, one reinforced heavy ponton bridge, and one semipermanent pile bridge, the last listed to be two-way Class 50 and one-way Class 90. In addition to storm and assault boats, rafts, Quonset barges, and DUKWs, river-crossing craft included 200 LVTs or Alligators and 60 medium tanks modified with DD equipment into amphibians. The latter two types were classified as secret equipment and were held in the rear areas, as was most of the bridging equipment to prevent the enemy from detecting our intentions. All, however, was to be brought forward on call. Since forcing the Po would be the

greatest river crossing in Fifth Army experience, very careful training was given to the 39th Engineer Combat Group of II Corps, based on the probability that II Corps would make the main effort across the Po; if the effort were made by IV Corps, all or part of the engineer group would be released to support that corps. The 85th Division also received special training, and the 1st Armored Division conducted extensive work in stream and river crossings, with an eye both to crossing the Po and to overcoming the numerous small streams in the Po Valley.

An elaborate program of deception was worked out, designed to give the impression that II Corps was shifting to the Eighth Army front and that IV Corps was taking over the entire line of Fifth Army on a defensive basis. In addition to false and real movements, restrictions on dumps, and radio activity, artillery fire was built up only gradually during the 20 days before D-day. Minor attacks also were made in the zones of both armies well before the main efforts, further to confuse the enemy and to pin down his troops. Along the Adriatic coast Commandos launched a successful amphibious operation on 2 April against enemy positions on the Comacchio Spit; on the extreme left of the Allied line the 92d Division under Fifth Army control from 3 April jumped off on the 5th toward Massa, five miles beyond our lines, and then La Spezia. For this effort General Almond used almost none of the organic infantry of the division. The 365th Infantry under Col. John D. Armstrong and the 371st Infantry under Col. James Notestein were earmarked to guard the long left flank of IV Corps; the 370th Infantry under Colonel Sherman played only a brief part in the attack. To take their place the division received the crack 442d Regimental Combat Team under Lt. Col. Virgil R. Miller, fresh from France, and the 473d Infantry under Col. William P. Yarborough, made up of ex-antiaircraft artillery-men.

The terrain ahead of the division did not encourage attack. On the left was a coastal plain, three miles wide, which was cut by water lines, each heavily fortified; our attacks across the first water barrier, the Cinquale Canal, in February had made no gains. On the right was the mass of sharp peaks, tremendous gorges, and sheer rocky cliffs called the Apuan Alps, absolutely impassable to large forces. Only in the strip of hills and lower mountains between the plain and the peaks was an offensive feasible. The division plan of attack accordingly called for the

442d Infantry to drive up the mountains overlooking the coastal plain, while the 370th Infantry on its left in the lower hills immediately above the flats pushed north and came in behind enemy strongpoints on the plain. The bulk of the 473d Infantry initially garrisoned the Serchio Valley. The operation of the 442d Infantry would be an all-out mountain offensive, for the rocky ridges in its zone ranged up to 1000 meters in height and were guarded by precipitous slopes and ravines, not to mention the extensive bunkers, pillboxes, and gun emplacements of the enemy.

After a series of air attacks on enemy positions and on the coastal guns of Punta Bianca, the promontory below La Spezia, the offensive began at 0500, 5 April.<sup>2</sup> A ten-minute artillery barrage came down, and the 442d and 370th Infantry moved out abreast. The former regiment passed through the 371st Infantry on Mt. Cauala and made an encircling attack on Mt. Fragolita, which fell together with several other hills by dark. Materially aided by our fighter-bombers, the 442d Infantry then continued north and in hard fighting during the rain and fog of the 7th cleared the summit of its first major objective, Mt. Belvedere, overlooking Massa. By this time the offensive on the left was seriously lagging. The 370th Infantry had advanced two miles up Highway 1 on the 5th, but recoiled before an enemy counter-attack. Two attacks which were scheduled for the morning of the 6th did not materialize, for the enemy had intercepted the attack orders; a projected attack in the afternoon was called off after it was discovered that excessive straggling had reduced the effective strength of the 2d Battalion to 88 men. General Almond accordingly committed the 473d Infantry in this zone on the 8th.

By noon of the 9th the 473d Infantry had pushed north up Highway 1 through a tank trap, extensive minefields, and heavy artillery and mortar fire to the outskirts of Massa; tanks of the 758th and 760th Tank Battalions reached the center of the city before strong resistance forced their temporary withdrawal. The town was outflanked from the east, where the 442d Infantry was forging ahead, and on the morning of the 10th the 473d Infantry occupied Massa with little opposition. After the fall of this point the troops under the command of the 92d Division continued to beat back the opposing 148th Grenadier Division. The 442d Infantry waded the Frigido River above Massa on the 10th, took Mt. Brugiana, and trudged over difficult terrain to enter Carrara, unopposed, early on the 11th. At this point supply problems

again became critical for the 442d Infantry, for the Massa-Carrara road had been rendered impassable by mines, craters, and artillery fire. When air drops were tried on the 12th, most of the rations fell over a cliff; only one box reached the hungry infantry. Finally the engineers opened the road from Massa, and the 442d Infantry prepared to drive on.

Our troops were now up against a strong German line, running behind Carrione Creek and manned by all the available enemy troops in the coastal sector. Attacks on the 13th by the 758th Light Tank Battalion and attached units in the plain near the coast and by the 473d Infantry on a front from Carrara nearly to Highway 1 met stiff resistance. Inland the 442d Infantry moved up a mountain road toward Fosdinovo but was stopped by artillery fire late on the 13th. On the morning of the 14th, as Fifth Army launched its main offensive far to the east, the command post of the 2d Battalion, 442d Infantry, was attacked in force by the 1st Battalion, 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment (90th Panzer Grenadier Division). The counterattack was beaten off, as were similar counterattacks along the coast; but during the next few days our advance was considerably slowed by the stiffened enemy resistance and by fire from the irritating Punta Bianca guns. Not until the 19th did the enemy, threatened by the breakthrough of IV Corps to the west of Bologna, prepare to pull back in the coastal sector.

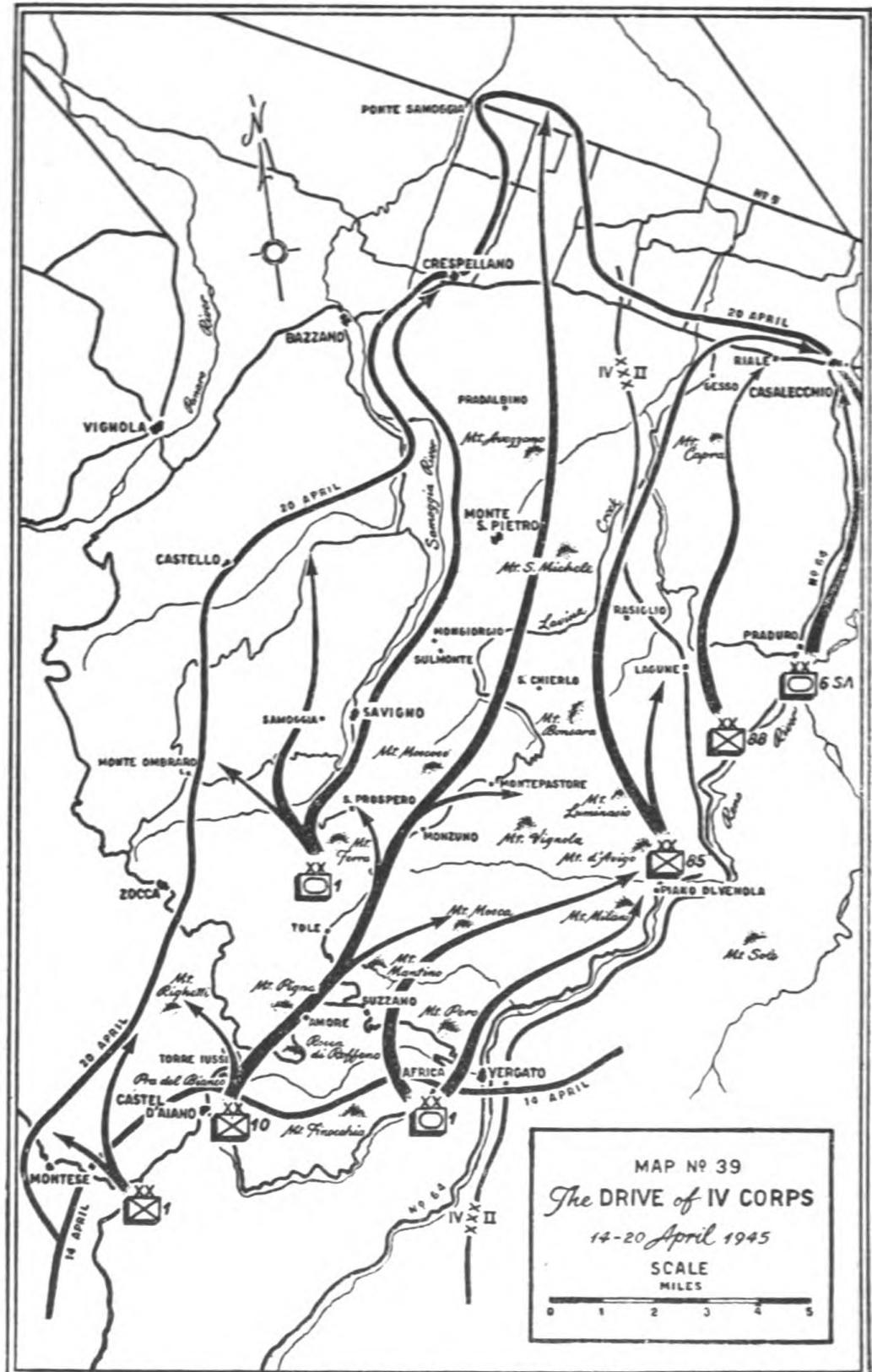
Although the attack of the 92d Division was slowed considerably during the period 14-19 April, it had more than served its purpose. Its primary objectives had been attained; the enemy to its front had been badly battered; and all available reserves in the area had been drawn into the line. Even more, the German command was so concerned over the thrust that it had committed on the 14th a battalion of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, thus diminishing its scanty tactical reserves at a time when the center of the German line was about to suffer heavy blows. The success of the 92d Division, as reported up to 14 April, augured well for the main attack of Fifth Army.

## 2. IV CORPS SMASHES THROUGH

14-20 April 1945

While the 92d Division was making its diversionary attack on the far left, the major units on the Fifth Army front were regrouping for their assault. On 10 April the 371st Infantry shifted east from the coastal zone and assumed responsibility for part of the left sector of the Brazilians on Mt. Belvedere, permitting the Brazilian 1st Division to move elements farther to the northeast to reduce the sector of the 10th Mountain Division. (*See Map 39.*) The same day the 1st Armored Division took command of the sector on the right flank of IV Corps immediately below Vergato. The Brazilian 1st, 10th Mountain, and 1st Armored Divisions were now in line from left to right on a narrow front from Mt. Belvedere to Vergato. The main road through the 15 miles of mountains still lying before IV Corps was Highway 64; at Vergato a minor road branches off and runs to the northeast to Modena via Zocca. An offshoot of this road leads north into the upper Samoggia Valley through Tole. West of Highway 64 and north of Vergato the hills fall away rapidly from the ridge on the west side of the highway into hillocks and then into the Po Plain; small settlements and unimproved roads become numerous as one approaches the flatland.

The enemy forces on the IV Corps front were generally concentrated in the area of greatest danger, from Montese to Vergato. The 232d Grenadier Division guarded the area to the west of Montese; to the east were the 114th Light Division, then the 334th Grenadier Division, and finally the 94th Grenadier Division astride the Reno. A line running generally north from Vergato marked the boundary between LI Mountain Corps on the west and XIV Panzer Corps on the east and also between the 334th and 94th Grenadier Divisions. Outside of local reserves, reinforcements could be gained from the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division south of Bologna. Our February-March attacks had wiped out the German main line of defense on the ridge just west of Highway 64, but after falling back to the neighborhood of Vergato the enemy had set to work to build up another line as rapidly as possible. Vergato itself was strongly fortified. A captured enemy appreciation of our situation indicates that he expected an attack in this area by IV Corps, probably before II Corps jumped off; nevertheless, the enemy misread the significance of the Belvedere operation and expected that the direct thrust toward Bologna on Highway 65 would be our main effort.



The broad plan of the Fifth Army attack called for IV Corps to hold its long left flank lightly and to concentrate its forces in a push up the hills on the west side of Highway 64. Four days after Eighth Army jumped off, IV Corps was to begin its attack northeast to gain the last hills of the Belvedere ridge, Mts. Pigna, Mantino, and Pero, which formed a wide arc open to the south and commanded the entry into the Samoggia Valley. Upon the seizure of this Green Line II Corps would begin its attack on the right; IV Corps was to continue northeast across a creek valley to gain the next line of hills barring the route to the Po Valley. This second line of hills, Mt. Ferra, Mt. Mosca, and Mt. Milano, was designated as the Brown Line. The final or Black Line extended east and west through Praduro and marked the real end of the hills.

Throughout the IV Corps attack to the Po Valley the 10th Mountain Division would bear the brunt of the effort in its wheeling attack to the northeast and then to the north. The 365th and 371st Infantry on the extreme left were to guard the west half of the IV Corps zone and be prepared to follow enemy withdrawals in the mountains and along Highway 12. Between these regiments and the mountain troops the Brazilian 1st Division was to hold its defensive positions, reconnoiter, and prepare on corps order to follow enemy withdrawals; its main function in the attack was to protect the dangerously exposed left flank of the 10th Mountain Division. On the corps right the 1st Armored Division would attack down Highway 64, but in the Black Phase the armor would pass to Army control; the 85th Division, which would take its place, was scheduled to be under II Corps, astride the Reno.

All troops were in their final positions for the attack, and preparations for the jump-off were completed by the morning of 12 April; then the attack was postponed for twenty-four hours because of cloudiness and low ceilings over the air bases on the west coast. Continued inclement weather again prevented action on the 13th, but in view of a favorable forecast for the 14th final plans for the attack were made. The battle lines were quiet before the 10th Mountain and 1st Armored Divisions on the 12th and 13th as activities and patrolling were held to a minimum. On the IV Corps left flank the Brazilians and two infantry regiments from the 92d Division continued a program of vigorous patrolling and artillery harassment of the enemy.

At 0945, 14 April, the 10th Mountain Division under General Hays led off with the first blow in the main offensive of Fifth Army. The hour, late enough in the day to provide ample time and light for the preparatory air program, contained also an element of surprise in that the Germans expected the blow to fall either at a much earlier hour or at night. Before the infantry jumped off fighter-bombers bombed and strafed enemy positions 0830-0910, blitzing the Mt. Pigna area with fire bombs; for the next 35 minutes our artillery poured shells on the German positions. Then the preparation ceased abruptly, and the first wave of infantry pushed across the Pra del Bianco basin toward the dust-shrouded and smoking German positions. The first objectives were the defenses on the north side of the basin as far east as Rocca di Roffeno. Once these were taken, the division would turn to the northeast and drive down the ridge to the hills marking the Green and Brown Lines. Immediately before the 10th Mountain Division was the 334th Grenadier Division; farther east, in front of the 1st Armored Division, was the 94th Grenadier Division on the ridges down which our mountain troops would sweep in their drive to the northeast.

The initial attack was delivered by two regiments abreast on a line of departure extending east from Castel d'Aiano, the 85th Mountain Infantry under Col. Raymond C. Barlow on the left and the 87th Mountain Infantry under Col. David M. Fowler on the right. Despite a tremendous weight of explosives and fire bombs from our artillery and planes, the enemy defenses were for the most part still intact when the infantry began their assault, and resistance was intense along the two-mile front of the main attack. German artillery fire, however, was limited. Shortly after noon the 85th Mountain Infantry was on the first hills to the north of the basin, but was stopped later in the afternoon. On the right the 87th Mountain Infantry reached the hamlet of Torre Iussi in the afternoon and battled its way through the houses by dark. The 86th Mountain Infantry under Col. Clarence M. Tomlinson, following the right rear of the 87th Mountain Infantry, was delayed by the battle in Torre Iussi, then carried on to the rocky promontory of Rocca di Roffeno in the middle of the afternoon. Before dusk the advance was halted across the entire front, and defensive positions were manned for the night.

Resistance had been strong all day, and casualties, particularly on the left flank, were heavy; 553 men were killed, wounded, or

missing in action during 14 April. The basin, however, was now south of the front lines. The large minefields prevented close armored support from the 751st Tank Battalion and the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion; the divisional engineers suffered many casualties in clearing paths.

On the following day the pattern of the 10th Mountain Division attack began to unfold. Until the Brazilians came up, guard of the left flank was entrusted to the 85th Mountain Infantry, aiming at the dominating mass of Mt. Righetti and hills overlooking the Panaro River to the northwest. The 87th and 86th Mountain Infantry, thus protected, drove northeast, the former on Mt. Pigna and the latter on Mt. Mantino. Both of these points fell during the 15th, Mt. Pigna early in the morning and Mt. Mantino late in the evening; to the south of Mt. Mantino the 1st Armored Division had occupied Suzzano and was on the slopes of Mt. Pero, the last peak in the Green Line. In the afternoon the 3d Battalion, 87th Mountain Infantry, occupied the hills just north of Mt. Pigna in preparation for a drive northward over the last ridge and into the village of Tole.

Only on the far left was enemy opposition intense. Here the 85th Mountain Infantry was stopped almost on its line of departure by heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire together with stubborn infantry resistance. The men in this area inched forward slowly until noon, when General Hays ordered the regiment to organize for defense on its present positions. The 10th Antitank Battalion was sent up from reserve to tie the left flank in with the Brazilians, and plans were made to shift the entire weight of the division to the northeast. The Brazilian 1st Division under General Mascarenhas meanwhile had taken Montese after a sharp fire fight and prepared to relieve the left elements of the mountain troops on 16-18 April. Throughout the period of the main IV Corps push on the right very heavy artillery concentrations from enemy guns on the upper Panaro fell in the Brazilian zone, especially about Montese; during the first twenty-four hours of the IV Corps attack this area received over 1,800 of the 2,800 rounds of enemy shell fire reported in the entire corps zone.

On the 16th the enemy laid a smoke screen along the road running north through Tole to cover the evacuation of his artillery and other elements from the Mt. Mantino-Mt. Mosca area. The 756th Grenadier Regiment had cracked, and the rear areas

of the entire 94th Grenadier Division were in imminent danger of being overrun. With his supply lines cut and American troops slashing into his rear areas in a style reminiscent of the French drive through Mt. Majo in May 1944, the enemy began a fierce delaying action to cover a withdrawal to his positions along the Panaro River.

The Germans, however, were unable either to stop the advance or to disengage from the swift mountain troops. The hills just north of Mt. Mantino were occupied after noon by the 2d Battalion, 87th Mountain Infantry, and the 3d Battalion passed through quickly to continue the drive to Mt. Mosca, the last high point along the eastern ridge line. The enemy defended stubbornly all the way. Enemy mortar and artillery fire constantly pounded the advancing troops, and after a successful assault of Mt. Mosca itself at 1415 the 3d Battalion needed almost two hours to mop up the crest of the hill. Early in the evening the Germans launched ten separate counterattacks against the newly won positions, but the gain was securely held. Even before Mt. Mosca was firmly in our possession, the 2d Battalion, 87th Mountain Infantry, attacked north from the ridge down into the village of Tole. The place was a shambles from bombing and heavy artillery fire and was occupied quickly against light opposition. By late afternoon the 86th Mountain Infantry with the 751st Tank Battalion, which had cut due north behind the Mt. Mosca drive, had pushed three miles into the gentler ground north of Tole and halted for the night at the hamlet of Monzuno.

With the enemy reeling backward, the 10th Mountain Division smashed northward on the 17th to open the way into the Samoggia Valley. The 87th Mountain Infantry, pushing forward on the left of the 86th Mountain Infantry, was checked for a time in the afternoon by exceptionally heavy direct artillery fire, but by dark it held San Prospero and Mt. Ferra. The 86th Mountain Infantry continued its drive north and northeast, clearing Mt. Moscoso early in the morning and stopping for the night well beyond this point. The speedy advance of the two leading regiments on the 17th was made possible in large part by the shifting of the 85th Mountain Infantry and the displacement forward of the artillery. The 85th Mountain Infantry continued its movement to the northeast, relieving elements of the 87th Mountain Infantry as rapidly as it in turn was freed from the left rear by the Brazilians. The main avenue of counterattacks

was from the Panaro Valley to the west of the advancing spearhead; it was this threat which the Brazilian 1st Division and the 85th Mountain Infantry covered as fast as the other two regiments moved northward. The artillery units had to displace in order to support the rapidly advancing troops, and new positions were occupied just south of the Mt. Mosca ridge during the day without incident. The main support could now be supplied by the armored units, for the terrain was rolling rather than rugged and the roads were in good condition north of Tole. The 10th Mountain Division now held its Black Line objectives after four days of swift, slashing attacks driving to the northeast across the enemy lines of communication.

While the 10th Mountain Division had made the main IV Corps attack, units on both the right and left flanks were playing their assigned parts. The Brazilians occupied Montese and came up behind the mountain troops; on the right the 1st Armored Division under General Prichard moved northeast in the hills immediately above Highway 64. The attack here began at 1700, 14 April, when the 14th Armored Infantry Battalion pushed north toward the hilltop village of Suzzano, supported by tanks of the 13th Tank Battalion and followed by the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion. Suzzano fell on the afternoon of the 15th; then the battalion turned east to Mt. Pero, which it occupied on the next morning. The 11th and 6th Armored Infantry Battalions moved out on the 16th from Suzzano to Mt. Mosca, which elements of the 10th Mountain Division had just taken, and turned to the northeast, the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion on the north. During the 17th these two battalions drove swiftly ahead, the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion to Mt. d' Avigo and the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion to Mt. Milano.

On the highway itself the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron had been assigned the laborious task of rooting the enemy out of Vergato, a house-to-house fight which lasted from 1845, 14 April, to daylight on the 16th. The reconnaissance elements then pushed down the winding Reno Valley nearly five miles to positions immediately below the armored infantry on Mt. Milano. Throughout its attack the 1st Armored Division had met light to moderate opposition, consisting largely of mortar and artillery fire and minefields; the sharpest infantry action had occurred at Vergato.

By the end of the 17th the enemy situation on the Fifth Army

front had become critical. The divisions facing II Corps had given ground very slowly and had thus far yielded only Mt. Sole and Monterumici, but their strength was diminishing under the constant pounding by our infantry and artillery. Any possibilities for an extended stand on Highway 65, however, were made slight by our breakthrough in the IV Corps zone. The 10th Mountain Division was moving into the last foothills before the Po Plain, with almost no enemy troops before it.

The crushing weight of the assault had split the 94th Grenadier Division, the major portion of which fell to the east of the 10th Mountain Division spearhead while the remainder of the division lay to the west with the 334th Grenadier Division. By the end of 18 April these two German divisions had each lost over 1,000 combat infantrymen as prisoners alone. Since the reserves of both divisions had for the most part been committed as early as the 15th, the only major enemy force available south of Bologna to throw into the breach was the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division. Even this unit was no longer at full strength, for elements had already been dispatched to the 92d Division front.

The enemy attempt to hold his extended front lines with the forces at his disposal was proving hopeless everywhere by the 17th; but even to fall back in good order to the Po it was necessary to plug the gap west of Bologna. Here, accordingly, the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division was committed, and on the 17th elements of the 2d Battalion, 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, the 190th Reconnaissance Battalion, and the 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment were identified on the IV Corps front. The division was not thrown in directly before the 10th Mountain Division but more to its left flank between the 334th and 94th Grenadier Divisions, the intention probably being to hold the west side of the gap and slow the central thrust by stiff counterattacks. Further reinforcement was gained by shifting the 754th Grenadier Regiment from the west to the east flank of the 334th Grenadier Division, west of the Samoggia.

As his defenses crumbled between the Reno and the Samoggia, the enemy, forced from the comparative safety of his prepared positions, sought to fall back in orderly retreat to other lines; Fifth Army, on the other hand, did its utmost to strengthen the penetration and press home the attack before the enemy could again get set. In accordance with previous plans the first move was the commitment of the 85th Division in the zone of the 1st

Armored Division, which had reached its Brown Line objectives. The first regiment of the 85th Division moved up on the 16th from the Arno Valley to the vicinity of Africa, near Vergato. The remainder of the division under General Coulter came forward the next day and immediately began the relief of the 1st Armored Division and the right elements of the 10th Mountain Division; this relief was completed shortly after noon on the 18th. The plan, however, had been changed insofar as the 85th Division was to operate under IV Corps; the momentum of the IV Corps advance could best be maintained by a unified command in its previous zone, and also II Corps was fully occupied in the stiff fight on Highway 65. On the 18th lessened enemy resistance in front of II Corps was to permit a general shift of its divisions to the west, and the 88th Division at that time took over a good part of the zone originally planned for the 85th Division.

The broadened attack of IV Corps, as envisaged on the 17th, was to continue to the north, generally between the Reno and Samoggia rivers, to secure an exit into the Po Valley and to assist II Corps to its Black Line objectives. In addition to the 85th Division on the right and the 10th Mountain Division in the center, the 1st Armored Division was also to be employed, this time on the left between the mountain troops and the Brazilians. The 1st Armored Division was ordered on the 17th to move one combat command to Tole immediately, to move the rest of the division after its relief by the 85th Division, and upon corps order to attack in its new zone east of the Panaro River. This shift would place the armor in better tank terrain and would strengthen the exposed left flank of the 10th Mountain Division.

The IV Corps attack was hardly slowed while a new division was committed and another shifted its entire axis of attack from the right to the left flank. As the 85th Division moved forward on the right and the 1st Armored Division got into position on the left, the 10th Mountain Division continued to serve as the spearhead in its drive down the last rolling hills toward the Po Valley. At midnight on the 17th the 85th, 87th, and 86th Mountain Infantry were in line from left to right; eleven miles ahead of our most advanced elements lay Highway 9, the main east-west artery behind the German lines. On the 18th the 86th Mountain Infantry advanced swiftly to the hamlet of Sulmonte, two and one-half miles north of Montepastore; then in the afternoon resistance stiffened as the men attempted to move northeast about 1000 yards

from Sulmonte to Mongiorgio. A heavy battle developed, and by 1900 the enemy was resisting with artillery, mortar, machine-gun, and small-arms fire. The leading elements of the battalion pulled back toward Sulmonte and held for the night. On the right the 2d Battalion moved to the northeast from Montepastore toward the village of San Chierlo against considerable machine-gun and small-arms fire. Despite this resistance the enemy was withdrawing as rapidly as possible, harassed though he was by our many air attacks on his horse-drawn columns. By evening the 10th Mountain Division had captured 2,917 prisoners, and small scattered groups all along the front were still surrendering.

During the day the Brazilian 1st Division completed the relief of the 85th Mountain Infantry, which moved to San Chierlo. The next morning the regiment passed through the 86th Mountain Infantry and assumed the lead. In the afternoon the enemy withdrawal broke into a rout; by 1630 the 1st Battalion held a road junction three miles northeast of Mt. San Michele and stopped there only to allow the supporting elements and reserves to catch up with it. To the left the 87th Mountain Infantry, which took over the battle at Mongiorgio on the morning of the 19th, finally controlled the village by the middle of the morning after bitter house-to-house fighting. The regiment then pressed forward on the left of the 85th Mountain Infantry; on the division right the 86th Mountain Infantry advanced without meeting any organized opposition.

From the final forward line on the evening of 19 April all three regiments of the division could look northward over the last few rolling hills into the Po Valley. The enemy was completely disorganized everywhere east of the Samoggia and was in no position to offer any further defense before our forces debouched into the Po Plain. West of the Samoggia, however, the enemy was still resisting the efforts of the 1st Armored Division, which had passed across the rear of the 10th Mountain Division; the successful advance of the mountain troops was due largely to this protection of their left flank.

The three regiments of the division descended abreast from the hills and swept out onto the floor of the valley on 20 April, their objective set at Ponte Samoggia, where Highway 9 crosses the Samoggia River. At 1500 the 1st Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry, now in the center, crossed Highway 9, and by 2000 the 3d Battalion held Ponte Samoggia; the 87th Mountain Infantry on

the left and the 85th Mountain Infantry on the right were not far behind. In seven days the 10th Mountain Division had broken through the main enemy defense line in the Apennines and had advanced 16 miles from Castel d' Aiano to Highway 9. In the lead all the way, the mountain troops were still ahead of the armor on their left and the 85th Division on their right.

Initially the 85th Division committed the 338th Infantry under Colonel Mikkelsen on the right of its new zone and the 337th Infantry under Colonel Hughes on the left. During the 18th the division attack met scant opposition, for the enemy was finding it difficult to reestablish a defense line. Occasional spotty resistance was met on the left beyond Mt. Luminasio, but before steps could be taken to remove this impediment orders were received changing boundaries and shifting the 85th Division farther west to make room for the 88th Division, which was moving to the left in the general westward shift of II Corps. The 338th Infantry along Highway 64 accordingly was ordered to go into reserve upon relief by the 6 South African Armoured Division. Actually the regiment was more pinched out than relieved, for the South Africans, crossing the Reno to get on Highway 64, encountered 88th Division elements north of the 85th Division and moved on from there.

The only 85th Division unit unaffected by the change was the 1st Battalion, 337th Infantry, on the extreme left flank, which was ordered to push on north. The battalion was held up for most of the 19th near Rasiglio and halted for the night slightly to the right rear of the 10th Mountain Division. On the 20th the 337th Infantry renewed the advance toward the road junction of Gesso, six miles west of Bologna. The division left was secured by the advance of the 10th Mountain Division; the right, though open, was not considered overly dangerous in view of the confusion existing in enemy ranks west of the Reno. The 85th Division, assigned only a very narrow zone, which was narrowed even more on the left by the fact that the 10th Mountain Division had not shifted completely over toward Mt. Avezzano on the 19th, operated with part of its forces in the zone of the 88th Division, which was somewhat behind on the right; the latter was to relieve these forces when it caught up.

The regimental Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon, moving on the easier route of the Lavina Creek road, pushed along and was in Gesso, out into the plain of the Po, by 0825 on the 20th.

The 1st and 3d Battalions in the hills on the right came up more slowly as they each knocked out knots of resistance which fought violently before capitulating. At noon, while the fight was still going on in the hills, General Truscott ordered the 85th Division to send forces to the right in a wide sweep across the front of the 88th Division and the 6 South African Armoured Division to the Bologna suburb and road center of Casalecchio, outposting the road northwest from Casalecchio in order to cut off the path of retreat of the disorganized enemy up Highway 64. The 2d Battalion (reinforced) received the job and held its assigned positions before dark.

Movement to the objective had not been unopposed. A strong fire fight occurred a mile west of Casalecchio, and the town itself was not entered by the 6 South African Armoured Division until late in the day, after both IV and II Corps units had heavily shelled it. Many Germans were cut off by the quick thrust around from the left, and fighting and movement continued throughout the evening. After midnight the 351st Infantry on the right and the 338th Infantry on the left passed through to continue without let-up the drive to smash the German forces before us. Casualties in the 85th Division for the period 18-20 April had totalled only 88 in all.

Even before the 85th Division had taken over the right flank of IV Corps, elements of the 1st Armored Division had begun to assemble for movement to Tole, behind the 10th Mountain Division and six miles due west of Mt. Milano. Combat Command A shifted west on the 17th; transfer of the division was continued on the 18th as the 85th Division accomplished its final reliefs of the armored elements. The shift to the new attack zone was not made without considerable difficulty. Only one road runs east and west between Tole and Highway 64 at Vergato; that road, though in fair condition except for a bad by-pass near Suzzano, was overloaded with traffic and deep in dust. The secondary roads in the vicinity were not fit for immediate use. Traffic conditions along Highway 64 were not improved by the fact that while elements of the 1st Armored Division were shifting to the rear and then westward the 85th Division was moving forward with infantry and artillery. Problems were further complicated on the afternoon of the 17th by steady enemy shell fire on the assembly areas south of Tole.

While units of Combat Command B under General Daniel were

still moving into position at Tole on the 18th, Combat Command A under Colonel Howze, operating in three columns of armor and infantry moving abreast, attacked north at 1220 astride the Samoggia Valley. At first progress was slow because of road conditions and intense artillery fire on forward elements, but steady advance was being made by the end of the day. The center column took Savigno by 1830 and reached a point on the west side of the Samoggia nearly four miles beyond by dark. Enemy counterattacks, however, forced a withdrawal of this column two miles during the night. The left column was stopped east of the hilltop road junction of Monte Ombrara, a strongpoint guarding the enemy escape route through Zocca.

Substantial progress had been made during the day; the 1st Armored Division thrust down the left was bearing the brunt of enemy efforts to strike into the flank of the 10th Mountain Division spearhead probing for the Po Valley. On the 18th the chief source of opposition had been infantry and antitank weapons. Late in the day the Germans brought up the armor of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, and on the 19th tank fought tank as the enemy made desperate efforts to stop or slow the breakthrough, which was assuming by then disastrous proportions. Throughout 19-20 April the German opposition materially slowed the armor and infantry of Combat Command A, now concentrated nearer the Samoggia, and Combat Command B, committed on the left flank near Monte Ombrara. This latter point did not fall until the evening of the 20th, by which time Combat Command A was finally breaking loose. In the early morning hours the 13th Tank Battalion reached Crespellano, out on the Po Plain due south of Ponte Samoggia.

At dark on the 20th IV Corps had three divisions coming out of the hills and onto the plain, the 85th Division just west of Bologna, the 10th Mountain Division about Ponte Samoggia, and the 1st Armored Division south thereof. The advance so far had been speedy for hill fighting; ahead lay possibilities of even swifter maneuver. Through the gap which had been opened up by the 10th Mountain Division and kept open by the units on its flanks, our troops might dash to the Po. The fact that II Corps had smashed through the defenses south of Bologna meant that the pursuit of the retreating enemy would take place on a large scale with all the major forces of Fifth Army involved in the co-ordinated but flexible push.

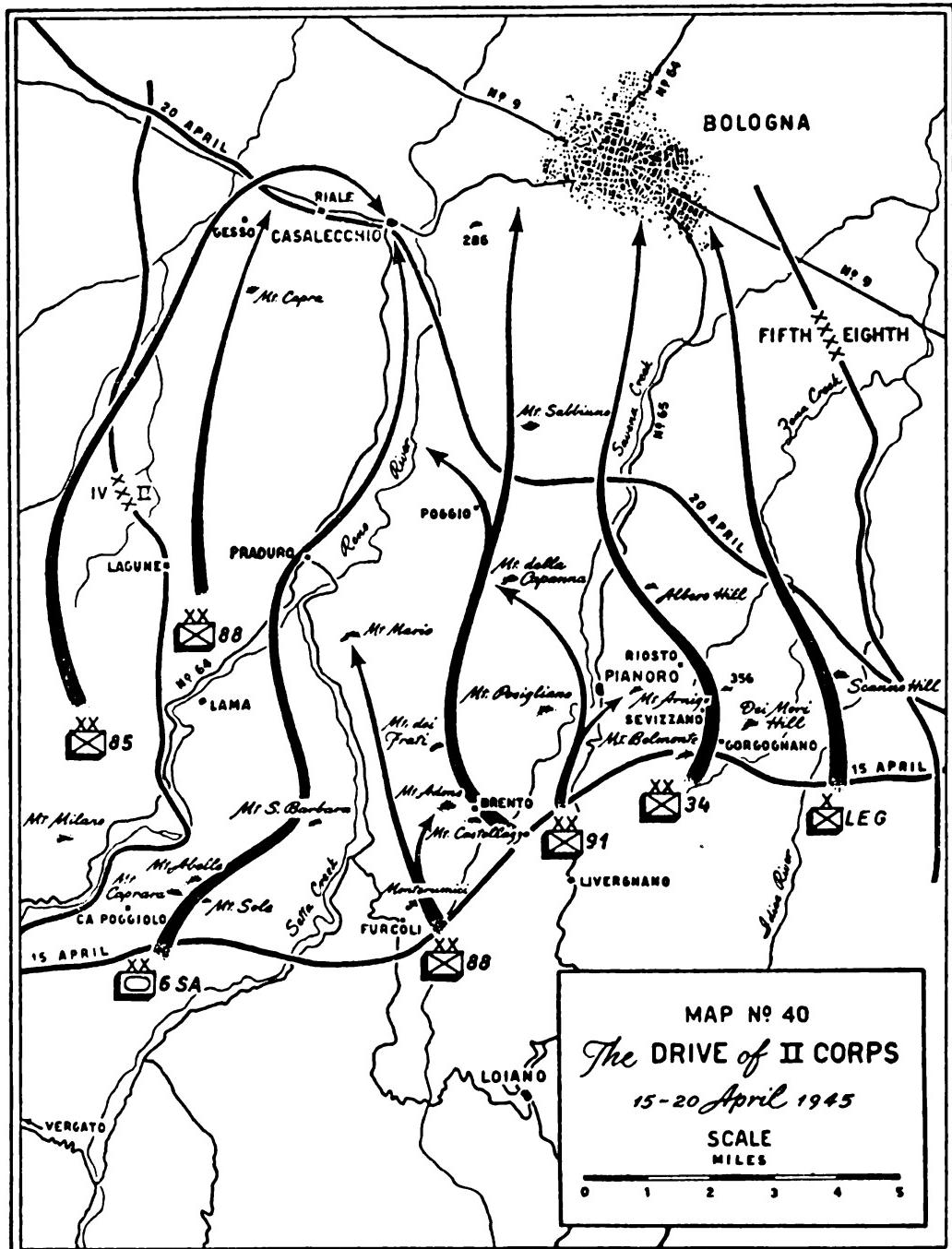
### 3. SLUGGING TOWARD BOLOGNA

15-20 April 1945

From the planning stage on, the attack of II Corps astride and west of Highway 65 had been visualized as a slow, grinding push. Though the terrain was not more difficult than that facing IV Corps, the enemy had had ample time to prepare his defenses; and inasmuch as he expected our main push to come straight down Highway 65 to Bologna, he had concentrated his attention on that area since the previous November. The G-2 defense overprints, issued from time to time through the winter and early spring, revealed an ever heavier concentration of bunkers, machine-gun nests, communication trenches, weapons emplacements, and the like; by April the German defenses before Bologna were as thick as in any area of the Fifth Army campaign thus far.

During the winter our forces had tested these defenses by minor attacks, which had been uniformly unsuccessful, and photo reconnaissance together with patrol reports had pinpointed the locations of many of the German installations. Key localities in the enemy system of defenses were Mt. Sole on the east bank of the Reno, Monterumici and the barren, steep-sided Mt. Adone commanding the west side of Highway 65, Pianoro on the highway itself, and to the east the hills north of Mt. Belmonte. (*See Map 40.*) Except for Mt. Sole, which lay off by itself, all of these points were interconnected. The fall of any specific hill did not guarantee penetration of the enemy line; rather, it was necessary to attack all along the line to pin down the enemy reserves and grind our way through the entire set of defenses. A repetition, in other words, was called for of the tactics which had been required throughout the Italian campaign, of generally frontal attacks with local envelopments, of hammering again and again at the enemy until his strength was worn down and his bunkers destroyed.

In the April attack the broad scheme of II Corps maneuver was to breach the German defense line and then to continue northwest, by-passing enemy points of resistance if necessary, so as to capture the Praduro road junction on Highway 64. Beyond Praduro II Corps was to be prepared to make its main effort either east or west of the Reno; in either event the intention was partially to flank the west side of the strong German defense lines immediately south of Bologna. The initial attack was to begin after IV Corps had reached its Green Line objectives; then II Corps would send four divisions against the enemy defenses. The



6 South African Armoured Division was to strike for Mt. Sole and Mt. Santa Barbara, the high ground between the Reno and Setta Creek; the 88th Division, for Monterumici; the 91st Division astride Highway 65, for Mt. Adone and Mt. dei Frati on its left and for Mts. Posigliano and Arnigo flanking Pianoro on its center and right. The role of the 34th Division was a limited attack for the Sevizzano and Gorgognano ridges northeast of Mt.

Belmonte. The Legnano Group on the extreme right would demonstrate vigorously without launching an assault.

Acquisition of these points marked the Brown Phase for II Corps. In the next or Black Phase II Corps was to make a strong effort north and northwest toward Bologna, the Legnano Group and the 34th Division on the right of Highway 65 and the 91st Division in a narrow zone on the left. The 88th Division would swing left to seize Mt. Mario, dominating the road center of Praduro and the Setta-Reno junction; then be prepared to cross the Reno to take over the South African zone. After establishing a bridgehead over the Reno the 6 South African Armoured Division was to be ready to pass to Army control for exploitation purposes.

As spring advanced and the imminent campaign drew near, the Germans had shown increasing sensitivity to the activities of II Corps. Yet, although they made several strong raids to seize prisoners and gain information, they apparently never became fully aware of the significance of the shifting of units behind our line. On the other hand the trickle of deserters and a few prisoners enabled II Corps to keep well abreast of enemy dispositions. The early part of April found the enemy line-up little changed from what it had been the month before. Beginning with the 1st Parachute Division just east of the II Corps eastern boundary, the enemy had in line to the west the 305th Grenadier, 65th Grenadier, 8th Mountain (formerly the 157th Mountain), and 94th Grenadier Divisions. All of our major objectives were defended by the mediocre 65th Grenadier Division astride Highway 65 and the first-class 8th Mountain Division on the major terrain features between the highway and the Reno River.

By the 14th II Corps was regrouped, ready for the attack. On the following afternoon 830 heavy bombers droned beyond our lines to attack targets along Highways 64 and 65 between the front and Bologna. At the same time 258 medium bombers concentrated on enemy installations and areas around Praduro. From 1630 to 1945 120 fighter-bombers in waves of four to eight planes pounded Mt. Sole. The next day the heavy bombers repeated their attacks while the medium bombers shifted to lines of communication in the Bologna area; the fighter-bombers worked on Mts. Adone, Posigliano, and Arnigo. Backed by this air effort, II Corps launched its first attack at 2230, 15 April,

when the 6 South African Armoured Division and the 88th Division drove toward Mt. Sole and Monterumici. Four and one-half hours later (0300, 16 April) the 91st and 34th Divisions began the second blow on the east toward Mt. Adone, Pianoro, and the Sevizzano ridge. As each attack began, the corps artillery fired its counterbattery and command post program, then concentrated on targets requested by the divisions.

Despite the weight of bombs and shells dumped on the German positions the attacking units of II Corps met stubborn opposition, and the first three days of the drive presented the familiar pattern of mixed success and failure. The German positions took every advantage of the rugged terrain and so were well-nigh impregnable. As long as enemy troops stayed in their holes, they suffered comparatively light casualties. Enemy minefields also were a potent factor in making initial progress of the attack slow and tortuous. On the other hand, although enemy artillery fire increased substantially compared to that of the previous static period, it never reached the proportions expected; during each of the first two days of the attack only about 1,050 rounds were received on the II Corps front. Prisoners stated that the air and artillery program preceding the attack so interdicted the supply routes and weakened the transportation system that ammunition could not be brought up to the guns. The appearance of bombers over the front also had a terrific effect on enemy morale.

During the initial period of slugging, 15-17 April, the 12 South African Motorised Brigade made the most spectacular gains of the entire corps in its attack on Mt. Sole. An hour and a quarter after H-hour advanced elements of the Royal Durban Light Infantry had reached a minefield 500-600 yards from the summit of Mt. Sole. Without waiting for a gap to be cleared a platoon leader and a handful of men rushed the field and caught the enemy still hiding in his shelters from the artillery fire. By 0530 Mt. Sole was firmly held; three counterattacks and heavy shellfire within the next one and one-half hours failed to drive us off the hills. The Witwatersrand Rifles/De la Rey Regiment captured Mt. Caprara on the west shortly after daybreak on the 16th, and in the evening the battalion took Mt. Abelle, the third feature in the Mt. Sole triangle. Attempts, however, to exploit down the four-foot razorback ridge leading northeast to Mt. Santa Barbara were stopped on the 17th, and further progress did not come until the general German evacuation on the 18th.

The efforts of the entire 88th Division and part of the 91st Division were directed at the boot-shaped Monterumici-Mt. Adone ridge. This ridge rises from Setta Creek, extends one-half mile east to Furcoli, there veers north to the southern main feature, Monterumici (678 meters), drops off to a broad saddle, and rises one and one-half miles beyond Monterumici to the jagged crag of Mt. Adone. General Kendall of the 88th Division sent two regiments against the ridge, the 349th Infantry under Col. Percy LeStourgeon toward Furcoli and the western slopes; and the 350th Infantry under Lt. Col. Avery M. Cochran on the right toward the crest of Monterumici. Farther to the northeast the 361st Infantry under Colonel Broedlow attacked for the crest of Mt. Adone.

The battle for this feature was the most intense of any on the II Corps front, for the enemy 8th Mountain Division was well dug in and was determined to hold. The 349th Infantry gained the rubble of Furcoli village by the morning of the 16th but got no farther in driving the enemy from the cave-studded ridge west and north of Furcoli either on the 16th or on the 17th. The 350th Infantry attacked west across Savena Creek, directing the 3d Battalion at the crest and the 2d Battalion to the saddle below Mt. Adone on the right. The latter unit was held up on the steep southern slopes of Mt. Adone until the 361st Infantry should take the crest; the 3d Battalion gained some devastated villages on the slopes of Monterumici but could not reach the crest on the 16th. One company, which pushed ahead too far, spent the afternoon in working its way out of an ambush. On the 17th the 1st Battalion attacked for the crest, reached it by the middle of the morning, and began pushing on northwest toward Setta Creek. Although the enemy continued to fight stubbornly—over 3,200 mortar shells fell on the 88th Division between 1000, 17 April, and 1000, 18 April—he was gradually being forced from his key positions. Furthermore, the power and persistence of the attack were inflicting losses which the Germans with their few reserves could ill afford.

In the zone of the 91st Division under General Livesay the 2d Battalion, 361st Infantry, was ordered to take the Mt. Castelazzo escarpment extending east from Mt. Adone to Savena Creek, and then swing west against Mt. Adone itself. At the same time the 3d Battalion was to push north to seize first Mt. Posigliano, due west of Pianoro, then take Mt. dei Frati, and finally move

south to capture Mt. Adone. The other regiment in the divisional attack, the 363d Infantry under Colonel Magill, was to seize Pianoro and Mt. Arnigo east of the town; farther to the east the 168th Infantry under Colonel Hine (34th Division) sent the 2d Battalion against Sevizzano ridge and the 3d on the right against Dei Mori Hill on Gorgognano ridge. All these units jumped off in the second prong of the II Corps attack at 0300, 16 April.

By dark of the 17th the 2d Battalion, 361st Infantry, was still in front of Mt. Adone, and the 3d Battalion was only coming to close quarters with the garrison of Mt. Posigliano. The 363d Infantry had been more successful and was within striking distance of the crest of Mt. Arnigo and the town of Pianoro; here it was beating off heavy counterattacks. The 168th Infantry had put elements on both the Sevizzano and Gorgognano ridges, and during the night gained control of the area up to the lower slopes of Dei Mori Hill. The enemy everywhere had held stubbornly in the old pattern of defense—heavy mortar fire, well laid minefields, and almost impregnable positions from which he poured out automatic-weapon and small-arms fire.

The progress of the battle on the Army front had thus far shown a striking similarity to that of the drive through the Gustav Line in May 1944. While the divisions of II Corps had slugged forward slowly over relatively gentle ground, another corps on its flank broke through in more rugged terrain and so forced a general enemy withdrawal—the FEC in 1944, and now IV Corps. The parallel, however, was not exact, for the units of II Corps had scored far more striking successes by dark of 17 April 1945 than at the end of 13 May 1944, when the enemy began to withdraw from the Gustav Line. Mt. Sole, the crest of Monterumici, the enemy positions guarding Mt. Posigliano and Mt. Arnigo, and the ridges north of Mt. Belmonte had all fallen; only west of Furcoli and at Mt. Adone were the enemy lines still intact. Though our attack had not secured a clean breakthrough along Highway 65, it had wrested vital points from the Germans and had placed the rest of the enemy front line in jeopardy; the persistent infantry, air, and artillery assaults had reduced the morale of the German garrison to such a point that by the end of the 18th the 8th Mountain Division alone had lost over 1,000 prisoners. Units south of Bologna further found themselves threatened with isolation in view of the IV Corps penetration and the continued advance of Eighth Army up Highway 9 on the east.

By dawn of the 18th the enemy in front of II Corps had commenced an orderly retreat all along the line. While IV Corps resumed the attack west of Highway 64 three divisions abreast after committing the 85th Division on its right, II Corps advanced against greatly reduced resistance, overrunning the German defenses to seize and go beyond its Brown Phase objectives. On the left the 13 South African Motorised Brigade passed into the lead and had patrols to the Setta-Reno junction by dark. The ridge west of Furcoli was taken in the morning, and the 349th Infantry in the afternoon cleared the triangular area between Furcoli ridge and Setta Creek. The 350th Infantry, freed by the capture of Mt. Adone in the morning, drove on three miles by midnight to a line one mile south of Mt. Mario. In addition to Mt. Adone the 361st Infantry took Mt. dei Frati in the afternoon and Mt. Posigliano in the evening. The 363d Infantry had the hardest fighting of the day along Highway 65; at dusk the most advanced elements were still 200 yards from Pianoro. The push continued after darkness, and American troops entered the heavily mined and booby-trapped rubble of the town at 2100.

The next day II Corps engaged in extensive shifts of its divisions to the left in accordance with the attack plan. As the 91st Division swung left toward the Reno and the 6 South African Armoured Division crossed that shallow stream at Praduro, the 88th Division, with the exception of the 350th Infantry still engaged at Mt. Mario, was pinched out and moved across the Reno to be recommitted on the right of the 85th Division. II Corps subsequently continued to the north astride the Reno River with two divisions on either side, the 88th Division and the South Africans on the west and the 91st and 34th Divisions on the right, with the Legnano Group still on the corps right. During 19-20 April the main effort was placed west of the Reno to cut Highway 9 and capture or isolate Bologna. At the same time II Corps was opening Highway 64 and clearing the area east of the Reno and south of Bologna.

On the 19th advance was disappointing all along the II Corps front. The enemy had largely disengaged on the preceding day, and now had his rear guards in spots suitable for brief, but intensive delaying actions; also the shift within the corps tended to hamper the advance. During the 20th the rate of our progress improved swiftly, and by dark all units were either out on the Po Plain or were pouring down the last hills. The South

Africans under General Poole were across the Reno by dark on the 19th, in Praduro early on the 20th, and just below Casalecchio in the afternoon; to their left the 88th Division had taken over its new zone at 0500, 19 April, with the 351st Infantry under Lt. Col. Franklin P. Miller in the lead. After scooping 400 prisoners from a stubborn pocket at Mt. Capra on the 20th the regiment reached positions a mile west of Casalecchio by dark.

East of the Reno the 91st Division drove ahead well to the left of Highway 65, slowly on the 19th and more rapidly on the 20th. Corps plans had called for the division to cross the Reno north of Praduro, pinch out the South Africans, and then swing back toward Mt. Sabbiuno on the outskirts of Bologna; although one battalion of the 361st Infantry did cross the stream on the afternoon of the 20th, the weakening of enemy resistance made the wide hook unnecessary. Early on the 21st the 1st Battalion, 361st Infantry, held Mt. Sabbiuno, and before noon elements of the 362d Infantry under Colonel Cotton were in Bologna.

The 34th Division under General Bolte and the Legnano Group under Maj. Gen. Umberto Utili had already converged on this point, with the 133d Infantry in the lead on Highway 65. During the night of 20-21 April troops of the 3d Battalion mounted the tanks of the 752d Tank Battalion and rolled into Bologna against scant opposition in the early morning hours, reporting their entry at 0851. The rest of the 133d Infantry under Col. Walden S. Lewis and the 135th Infantry under Col. John M. Breit entered the city later in the day. A few enemy snipers were soon eliminated, and roadblocks were set up on routes leading out of the city on the north, east, and west. The 34th Division then reverted to direct Army control to garrison Bologna. The Legnano Group also came up later in the day and after clearing the eastern outskirts of the city reverted to corps reserve.

As advance elements of the 34th Division entered Bologna, troops of 2 Polish Corps came in from the southeast along Highway 9, racing forward on the left flank of Eighth Army. Here enemy resistance had initially been stubborn from the prepared positions along the Senio River, but by 21 April the Germans were pulling back before Eighth Army in complete defeat. The attack of General McCreery's forces had begun on 9 April, with 13 Corps, 10 Corps, 2 Polish Corps, and 5 Corps aligned from left to right on a 60-mile front from the Idice River to the Adriatic Sea; primary emphasis had been given to 5 Corps, driving north-

west to seize the dry land of the Argenta Gap between the Reno and Lake Comacchio. Though enemy resistance had taken advantage of every watercourse, 5 Corps had smashed through Bastia and the Argenta Gap despite the commitment of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. By the 21st British armor was rolling across the Po Plain only ten miles south of Ferrara, with the mission of effecting a junction with Fifth Army in the vicinity of Bondeno.

The fall of Bologna on the morning of 21 April came with unexpected ease. Appreciation of enemy intentions before our attack was launched had included the possibility that the enemy would leave a suicide garrison in the city even after we had surrounded it, on the model of recent German resistance in western Europe; for the city was a vital road junction, standing as it did at the point where our main lines of supply, Highways 64 and 65, both came out onto the Po Plain. The German command, however, was in no mood to waste troops on the protracted defense of Bologna. Indeed, the inability of the enemy to hold the excellent defenses astride Highway 65 made it appear unlikely that the closer defenses of the city could have been successfully manned, particularly in view of the partisan threat within the city itself. The partisan uprising came only as we entered Bologna, for the Germans were too numerous; but the groups of patriotic Italians operated quickly to seize the agencies of government and the public utilities. Throughout the 21st they assisted troops of the 34th Division in seizing German stragglers and armed Fascists in the streets of Bologna. During the next two weeks our advance into other cities of the Po Valley was to receive ever greater aid from the partisans as the German collapse became more evident.

The drive to Bologna, objective of Fifth Army since the fall of 1944, had taken place with astounding speed, and its surrender had by the 21st become almost incidental to a greater success. In seven days we had broken the German line from the Panaro to the Idice; yet more, the 10th Mountain Division had split the enemy forces in two, and by masterful shifts of entire divisions General Truscott had widened the gap until it threatened the destruction of the entire German force in Italy. On the left IV Corps had the 1st Armored, 10th Mountain, and 85th Divisions either on the edge of the plain or up to Highway 9 by early morning of the 21st; on the right the 88th, 6 South African Armoured,

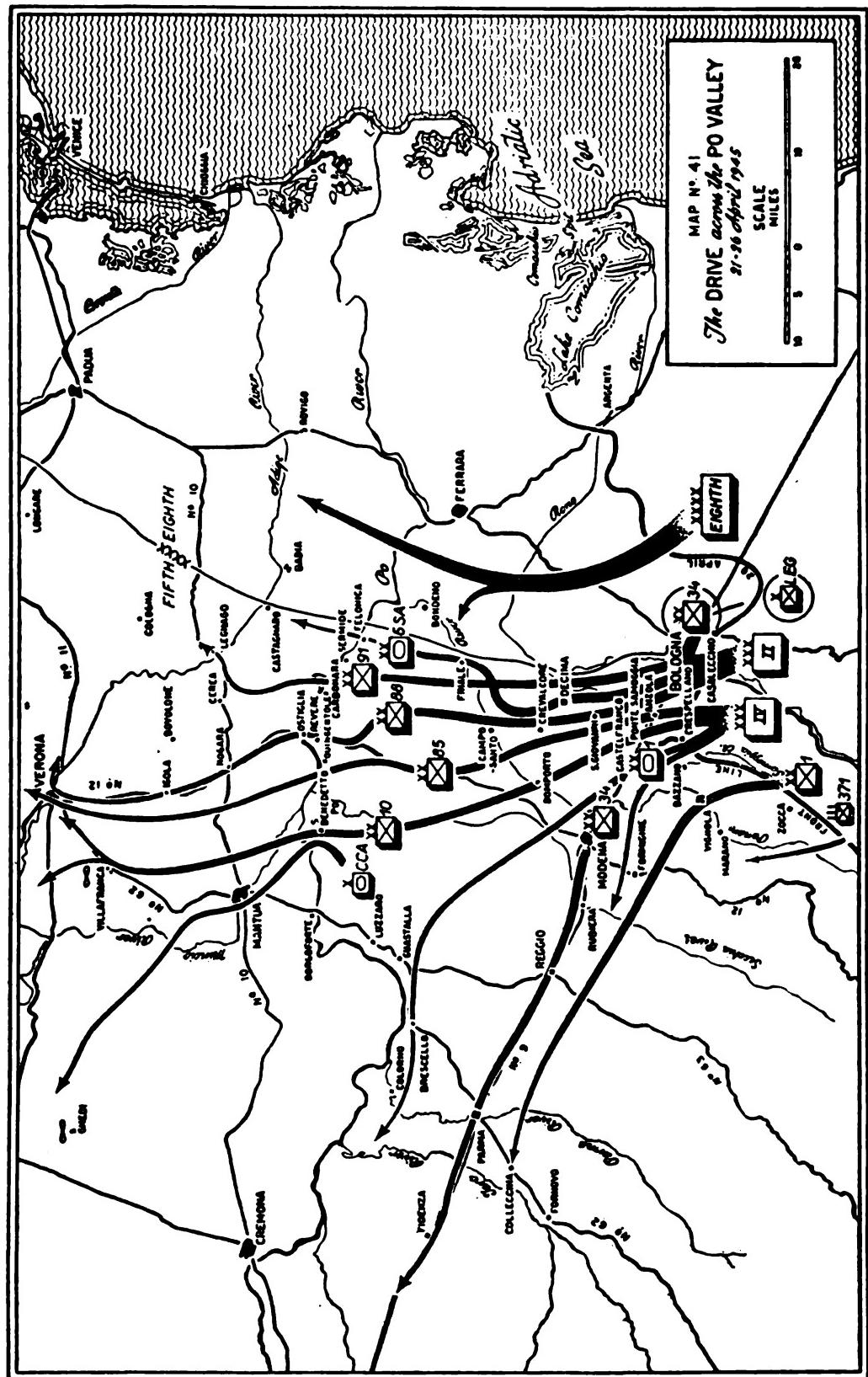
and 91st Divisions were pouring down either side of Highway 64, ready to race to the Po. Casualties so far had been 4,630, with the heaviest losses (1,625) in the 10th Mountain Division; supply had been more than adequate. Though Fifth Army had reached the plain more rapidly than could be expected, the services of supply could be counted on to do their utmost to support a swift drive across the valley to seize Verona and so split the enemy entirely in two. In that drive the mobility of Fifth Army, which had already shown itself in the speedy shifts on the 17th and 18th, would be extended to the utmost.

#### 4. THE RACE TO THE PO

21-24 April 1945

On 21 April Fifth Army launched the pursuit to the Po with II and IV Corps abreast, each in the strength of one armored division and two infantry divisions. Army orders, as issued on the 19th, called for the corps first to secure the line of the Panaro, II Corps on the right and IV Corps on the left of Camposanto. Then all troops would drive to the Po on the Borgoforte-Sermide line, with Ostiglia as dividing point between corps. (*See Map 41.*) General Truscott's orders placed the emphasis on speed and more speed; for the first time in the Italian campaign we had an enemy falling back in terrain suitable for swift pursuit. The Germans were short of vehicles and gasoline; they were retreating across an open valley with a superb network of roads for our mechanized forces; and in that retreat they were forced to cross a wide river by means of ferries and ponton bridges. The slow, persistent tempo of mountain fighting yielded to the headlong dash of our forces to reach the Po.

In the advance to the river units pushing forward in the center ran into comparatively light resistance; elements fanning out on either flank found the enemy willing and able to put up stiff opposition. The explanation of this variation lies in the enemy situation. As the left flank of the German Fourteenth Army collapsed west of the Reno and the remnants of XIV Panzer Corps fled north of Bologna, LI Mountain Corps, still relatively intact and west of our main attack, instituted a withdrawal from its mountain positions north across Highway 9. Consequently the thrusts northwest along that highway by the 1st Armored Division and then by the 34th Division met a series of well organ-



ized delaying forces in the vicinity of Modena and Parma covering the enemy retirement to the north. A similar situation was encountered on the right; there the 1st and 4th Parachute Divisions fought fiercely to cover the exposed right flank of Tenth Army as it fell back across the Po before the British Eighth Army.

Only in the center, due north of Bologna, was there a complete gap in the enemy's line, but that hole was sufficient for his undoing. With the exception of the Panaro River line, where the Germans made a futile effort to hold open the bridges at Bomporto and Camposanto while denying their use to our forces, the resistance encountered was disorganized and ineffective, consisting chiefly of small knots of soldiers dug in around houses or along canal banks. Even the Panaro River defense line was makeshift and constituted no major obstacle; both the Bomporto and Camposanto bridges, ready for demolition though they were, were taken intact by troops of IV Corps on 21-22 April and so speeded our race to the Po materially.

For the IV Corps pursuit General Crittenberger utilized the 1st Armored Division on the left, the 10th Mountain Division (reinforced) in the center, and the 85th Division (less the 339th Infantry) on the right. The Brazilian 1st Division immediately west of the 1st Armored Division was to reconnoiter aggressively and follow enemy withdrawals; the 365th and 371st Infantry on the lightly held extreme left were also to continue following the enemy.

Early on the 21st the 10th Mountain Division sent ahead Task Force Duff, consisting of tanks, tank destroyers, engineers, a battalion of infantry, and the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron under Brig. Gen. Robinson E. Duff, toward Bomporto, 13 miles from Ponte Samoggia. A rapid advance along the narrow roads, by-passing all towns, was continued throughout the day, and our troops were opposed only by snipers and occasional machine guns. The task force was out of communication with the remainder of the division much of the time, but the entire division advanced as fast as possible in the wake of the spearhead. A steady stream of bewildered prisoners from a great variety of units marched south unguarded alongside the northbound columns. By 1600 the Bomporto bridge was securely held by Task Force Duff, and the engineers began to remove the unexploded demolition charges under the bridge. On the next day the task force again sped ahead, this time 24 miles to the town of San Benedetto Po; by

2300 the division was assembling on the south bank of the Po, using its own trucks and captured enemy vehicles to shuttle troops forward.

The opportunity was clear, and on the morning of the 23d General Hays prepared for a scratch crossing of the Po. During the morning 50 M2 assault boats with paddles were brought forward from the corps dump and dispersed along the south bank. A battalion of self-propelled 105mm howitzers and a battery of 5.5-inch guns were ready to give supporting fire for the crossing. H-hour was set finally at noon, and preparations for the initial crossing by the 1st Battalion, 87th Mountain Infantry, were completed hastily. Though a murderous barrage from enemy antiaircraft guns was received in the assembly area a few minutes before the jump-off, the 1st Battalion paddled the 300 yards across the river on schedule and was followed immediately by the remainder of the 87th Mountain Infantry. The very scanty enemy forces did their utmost, throwing artillery, machine-gun, mortar, and sniper fire at the assaulting troops, but by 1745 the 87th Mountain Infantry had established a bridgehead 2000 yards square on the north bank of the Po River. The 85th Mountain Infantry was over by 1800, and the 86th Mountain Infantry crossed during the night.

The bridgehead was difficult to support or to supply because of the lack of adequate preparations before the crossing, but the next day (24 April) engineer bridge crews began the construction of a ponton bridge and a treadway bridge. A battalion of DUKWs reached the river early in the evening of the 23d and assisted with the later parts of the crossing. A cable ferry was operating by the afternoon of the 24th, and light tanks and guns began to cross to the north bank. By dark the 10th Mountain Division held a somewhat damaged bridge over the Mincio at Governolo and had expanded its bridgehead well beyond the latter river. Far more swiftly than the enemy had expected, our troops had broken the Po defense line; the situation was ripe for further exploitation as soon as the 85th Division had crossed.

This unit had secured the line of the Samoggia on the morning of the 21st and started for the bridge over the Panaro at Camposanto in the afternoon. Shortly after dawn on the 22d the 338th Infantry in the lead on tanks and trucks reached the river; then the 337th Infantry passed through and battled against enemy antiaircraft and other troops in Camposanto. Though the vital

bridge had been secured before it could be demolished, clearing the town proved an all-day battle, even with the aid of the 6 South African Armoured Division on the right, and the bulk of the regiment was not able to cross the Panaro until nightfall. All night the 337th Infantry pushed on, and by 1045, 23 April, the 3d Battalion reached the Po at Quingentole. A line was established along the river to head off any escaping Germans, and the 85th Reconnaissance Troop moved on to Revere and partially cleared the town; the bridge there was found to have been wrecked several days before. The region, however, was by no means clear; enemy forces, ignorant of the fact that they had been beaten to the river, were still streaming north to Revere-Ostiglia. During the night one group tried to force a crossing but was driven away, and the next day the 88th Division also had some trouble at Revere with Germans who had infiltrated back into the town after 85th Division units moved out to assemble for the crossing at Quingentole.

Since Combat Command A had come up to Guastalla and Luzzaro on the west of the 10th Mountain Division during the morning of the 23d, IV Corps now held all its stretch of the Po and even had one division over the stream. The left flank of this penetration was protected until the 23d by Combat Command B, battling up Highway 9 and blocking the roads from the mountains as it progressed. The Germans haggled over Panaro crossings east of Modena on the 22d and again on the next day at the Secchia west of that city, where Combat Command B, driving nearly due west south of the highway, was stopped. Modena itself was largely by-passed and left to the partisans to clear. The 34th Division came up from Bologna and relieved the armor on Highway 9 on the 24th. Still farther to the left the Brazilian 1st Division emerged into the plain late on the 23d at Marano and Vignola and moved northwest along the foothills south of Highway 9. An interesting action was soon to develop in this area as the main forces of the Army continued their push north to Verona.

On 21 April, as Bologna was being cleared, II Corps struck north for the Po. The pattern of resistance before II Corps bore some resemblance to that before IV Corps to the west. Units toward the Army center ran into less difficulty than those moving up on the right. The Panaro River constituted an obstacle which was more strongly defended around Finale on the eastern boundary than it was in the direction of Camposanto. The 1st

and 4th Parachute Divisions suffered heavy losses but successfully covered Tenth Army's flank in the retreat across the Po; the junction of Fifth and Eighth Armies near Bondeno was effected too late for maximum success.

Initially the 6 South African Armoured Division was to be in the lead, first to hold crossings over the Reno northwest of Bologna until relieved by infantry, then to take and hold the important road center of San Giovanni, and thereafter to cover the entire corps front, followed by the 88th Division on the left and the 91st Division on the right. On the 21st the armor cleared the right bank of the Reno north of Bologna; after it had halted for the night the 88th Division passed through to take San Giovanni. On the following day the 11 South African Armoured Brigade set out for Finale on the east flank, and the 12 South African Motorised Brigade started for Camposanto on the west. Both units were held up by enemy opposition, and the division did not get across the Panaro until the morning of the 23d. At this time contact was made with the 6 Armoured Division of Eighth Army two miles east of Finale. II Corps had now changed its plan of action and moved the South Africans to a zone of their own on the right flank running up to Felonica on the Po, which advanced elements reached on the afternoon of the 24th. In the last two days bridging the Panaro caused the South Africans as much delay as enemy opposition; part of the division crossed at Camposanto on the 23d, and other elements used the 91st Division bridge halfway between Finale and Camposanto. A division bridge was opened at Finale on the morning of the 24th, and the rest of the 6 South African Armoured Division then moved up to Felonica preparatory to crossing the Po.

To the left the 88th and 91st Divisions had already reached the river and were putting their leading elements over. The 88th Division cleared San Giovanni on the night of 21-22 April and reached the Panaro east of Camposanto in the middle of the afternoon on the 22d. The South Africans had arrived at the river a little to the west some three hours previously; over in the IV Corps zone the 10th Mountain Division had already crossed, and the 85th Division was clearing Camposanto preparatory to crossing. Elements on the right, however, had not yet come up to the Panaro. In the zone of the 88th Division the 913th Field Artillery Battalion laid down a heavy curtain of fire to smother a small band of Germans north of the river; the 2d Battalion, 351st Infantry,

then moved over on a semi-demolished bridge, and a short distance to the east the 1st Battalion crossed on improvised rafts of timbers and doors.

On the 23d the 350th Infantry passed through the 351st Infantry and with the 349th Infantry on the right dashed toward the Po, first northeast and then north when the corps boundary was shifted west past Revere. After a hectic day the 349th Infantry reached the Po north of Carbonara at 2000 and fanned out along the river bank to gather in the thousands of German stragglers in the vicinity. The 350th Infantry, shifting over to the left astride Highway 12, arrived at the river a little later.

The 88th Division had closed in on the Po where the Germans were assembling their shattered forces for the escape across the river. As a result the prisoner haul, large along the whole Army front, reached its peak in the 88th Division zone. From noon on 23 April to noon on 25 April, approximately 11,000 prisoners were taken, the bulk of them from the 65th Grenadier, 305th Grenadier, and 8th Mountain Divisions. A testimonial of the confusion existing behind the enemy lines was the capture of the first German division commander taken during the whole Italian campaign, Major General Von Schellwitz, commander of the 305th Grenadier Division, as well as his G-3, signal officer, and division artillery commander.

The advance of the 91st Division to Sermide, downstream from the 88th Division, had been almost as swift, though the division had had to spend the 21st in getting its troops around and through Bologna. By midnight of the 22d advanced elements of the 363d Infantry, riding tanks and tank destroyers, reached the Panaro. There the infantry dismounted from the vehicles and crossed the river by foot bridges halfway between Finale and Camposanto while the armor and trucks went around to the Camposanto bridge. Movement beyond the Panaro was unopposed until a few miles southwest of Sermide, where our forces lost two tanks to a self-propelled gun in a sharp fire fight. The Germans disengaged thereafter and apparently got away across the Po, for no more resistance was encountered as the 363d Infantry moved north to reach the river banks near Carbonara west of Sermide at 0800, 24 April. On the division right the 362d Infantry was held up by the battle of Germans and South Africans below Finale and also by orders to gain contact with Eighth Army; when the 6 South African Armoured Division

took over the right flank of II Corps, two battalions of the 362d Infantry were entrucked and taken around by way of the Camposanto bridge to continue the attack north, closing in at Sermide about noon on the 24th.

By the end of 24 April Fifth Army, large parts of which had already crossed the Po, held the south bank of that river on a line extending about 60 miles from the Taro River to the Eighth Army boundary at Felonica, with the 1st Armored, 10th Mountain, 85th, 88th, 91st, and 6 South African Armoured Divisions along the banks from west to east. Since the 21st these troops had covered 40 miles from the mountain to the river through the smashed center of the German armies. Driven to desperation, the Germans had taken to the roads in daylight and had thus laid themselves open to our far-ranging planes. By the end of the 22d increasing numbers of abandoned vehicles and equipment began to tell the story of disorganization and panic in a retreat which had thus far remained orderly. When clearing weather on the 23d once more gave our planes free rein, the enemy columns converging on the river crossings were blasted into shambles of wrecked and burning junk.<sup>3</sup> The wreckage was accompanied by a prisoner bag which assumed fantastic proportions as our forces closed in on the Po; in the period 21-25 April Fifth Army took approximately 30,000 prisoners at a cost of 1,397 casualties. Even a superficial analysis of the personnel taken is sufficient to highlight the picture of confusion and breakdown in command existing behind the enemy lines; captured rear echelon personnel were a commonplace—hospitals, bakeries in which the bread was still warm, a paymaster with his payroll, and personnel units. Though the bulk of the German forces managed to get across the Po before our arrival, the loss in equipment augured ill for any extended stand on their part thereafter; already six divisions could be practically written off the books.

## 5. THE COLLAPSE OF THE GERMAN ARMIES

24 April-2 May 1945

On 24 April the sands were running out for the Italian branch of the Wehrmacht. Eight days of life remained to a once proud army, eight days of frantic efforts to escape a relentless pursuer, eight days of disintegration of leadership, organization, and the will to resist in the face of inevitable defeat. As they fled back

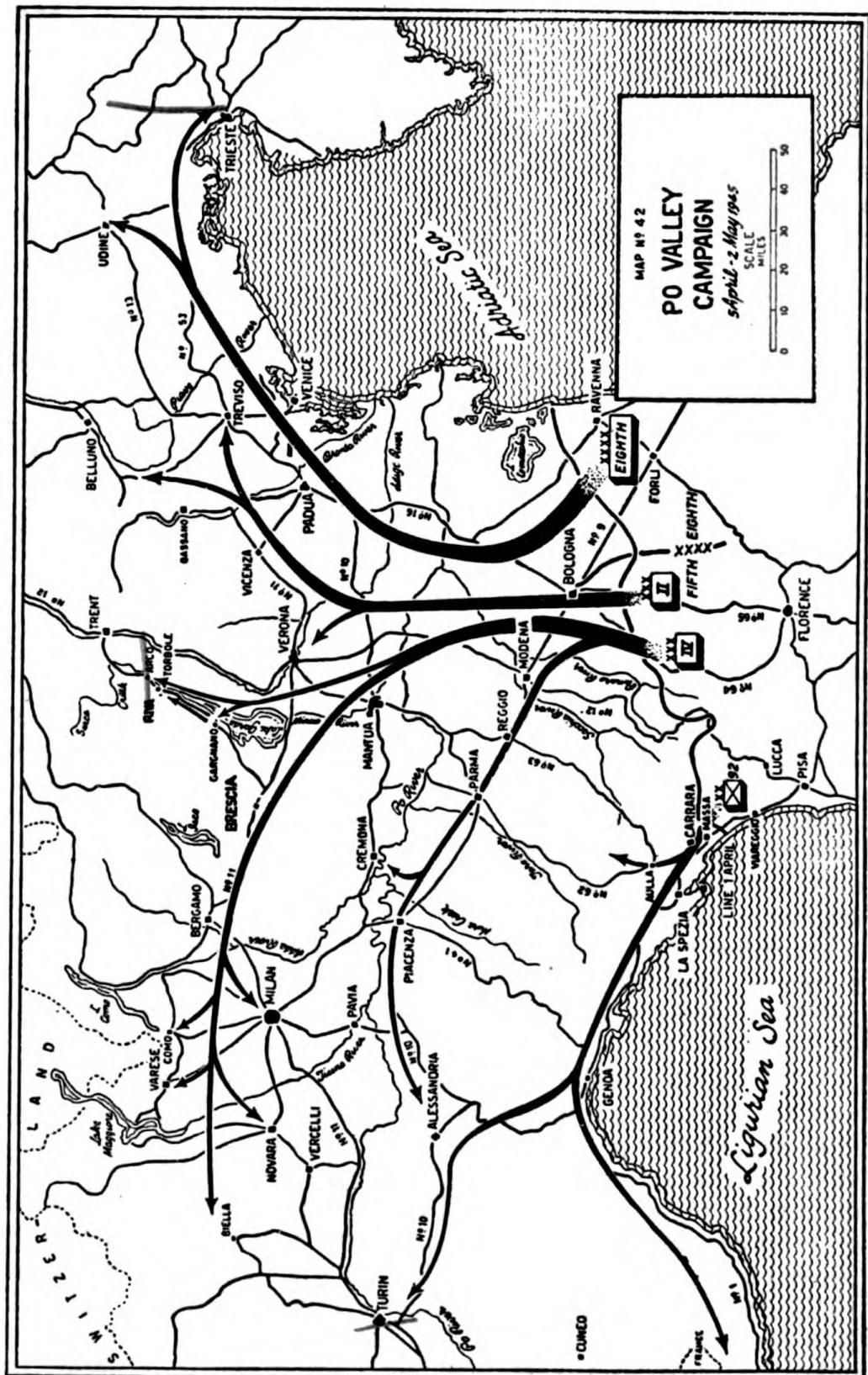
across the Po, the German armies in Italy were but a pale, ineffectual shadow of their former selves. Their center north of Bologna was completely smashed, and the forces on either flank, though still in fair condition, were no longer attempting to give battle south of the river; they were concerned rather with efforts to prevent the spread of the penetration to the east or west while they made good their escape. Fifth Army at the Po was nearer the Alpine exits than the enemy forces on either side.

Plans for a set piece assault crossing against a strongly defended river line were abandoned when the disintegration of German forces became apparent. Victory was nearly within reach, and General Truscott ordered the attacking divisions to cross as soon as possible and to drive as far as they could. Infantry crossings were begun by the 10th Mountain Division on the 23d in the face of determined though insufficient opposition, and by the 24th the operation was in full swing. The 85th Division put its first forces across that day without firing a shot, established ferries, and placed assault barges in operation.

Bridging the river thereafter was a mad scramble in which little went according to plan. The elaborate preparations made by the engineers before our attack began had been based on the assumption that II Corps would probably make the crossing with the 85th Division in the lead. Instead, three divisions of IV Corps arrived on the river bank ahead of any units of II Corps, and the 10th Mountain Division actually made the first crossing. On the morning of the 23d all readily available II Corps bridging equipment—assault craft for one regimental combat team and one M1 treadway bridge—was directed to IV Corps, but arrived piecemeal; the M1 bridge convoy started for Quingentole, too far to the east, but finally reached San Benedetto on the next morning.

Work on this bridge was begun after noon on the 24th but was delayed until missing cables and ropes arrived. At 1930 the same day a heavy ponton bridge was started three miles upstream at the site of a former floating bridge. Work proceeded rapidly during the night, and early in the morning, as the men began to slow up because of fatigue, two fresh companies were put on the ponton bridge and a whole battalion on the treadway bridge. By 1230, 25 April, the treadway bridge was opened for traffic, and four hours later the ponton bridge was open.<sup>4</sup>

Both bridges, each over 900 feet long, were ready approxi-



mately twenty-four hours after beginning of construction despite handicaps such as inexperienced labor on the ponton job and the necessity of putting in double anchors and an overhead cable to hold the treadway in the swift, soft-bottomed river. Within forty-eight hours an armored division, an infantry division reinforced with armor, and part of a II Corps division had passed over without incident. As a result of the transfer of this equipment to IV Corps on the 23d, II Corps was delayed in starting its own bridges, but the engineers had an M2 treadway open at Ostiglia on the 26th. The burden of bridging first the Po, then the Adige and the Brenta, all three major rivers, placed a heavy load on the engineers of II Corps.

While the bridges went in, Fifth Army was already far north of the river. By Army orders on the 24th IV Corps on the left, employing initially three divisions north of the river, was to drive north on the axis San Benedetto-Mantua-Verona with the important Villafranca Airfield and the city of Verona as the main objectives. (*See Map 42.*) At the same time IV Corps was to dispatch strong, fast detachments straight north to the Alpine foothills where they would turn west to drive along the northern edge of the Po Valley through the cities of Brescia and Bergamo and so block the routes of egress from Italy between Lake Garda and Lake Como. II Corps on the right was to move north along the axis of Highway 12, which enters Verona from the south, to seize the west bank of the Adige River from Legnano north to Verona. Full attainment of the objectives would block escape routes to the north between Verona and Lake Como and would place Fifth Army in position to assault in strength from Legnano to Lake Garda the last major defensive system left to the Germans in Italy, the Adige River line.

The whirlwind drive which followed was one of the most brilliant in the entire history of Fifth Army. Everywhere in the Po Valley there were action and movement—the enemy struggling to get out of the plain, but disorganized in command and smashed by our ranging planes; our forces moving here and there in seeming confusion, but actually carrying out a masterful plan to hem the enemy into ever narrowing pockets. Although the constant shifting of units and the enormous extension of supply lines taxed Army supply facilities to a degree never before experienced in Italy, the advance did not suffer a major delay because of shortages. Indeed, according to captured enemy officers

German plans of retirement had been based on the assumption that even in the event of a breakthrough Fifth Army would have to stop at the Po to await supplies before resuming the offensive. Such was not the case; the offensive continued without pause, and the disorganized Germans consequently never had time to pull their scattered forces together.

On 24 April IV Corps had Combat Command A, the 10th Mountain Division, and the 85th Division in line along and across the Po and the 34th Division, the Brazilian 1st Division, and two detached regiments of the 92d Division protecting its left flank from Highway 9 south. The 10th Mountain Division had put all three of its regiments, including artillery, across the Po on the 23d and 24th, and organized Task Force Darby under Colonel Darby of Ranger fame to lead its pursuit. While this force waited on the completion of the corps bridges, patrols and partisans reported enemy withdrawals to the front during the night of 24-25 April. Shortly after midnight the 85th Mountain Infantry moved north to Villafranca Airfield, which it reached by the middle of the morning on the 25th. With no assurance of immediate support to the rear, the men of this regiment had marched almost 20 miles, most of it in darkness, through strange country, and without adequate maps. At dusk Task Force Darby caught up with the 85th Mountain Infantry and moved on cautiously toward Verona, to find upon arrival at 0600, 26 April, that the 88th Division had entered the city some eight hours before. By the end of the day Task Force Darby was driving along the east side of Lake Garda; with the 85th Mountain Infantry at Villafranca and the 86th Mountain Infantry resting at Verona, the 10th Mountain Division had closed the escape routes to the Brenner between Verona and Lake Garda.

The 85th Division had by this time come up on the right after crossing the Po at Quingentole by rafts, DUKWs, and assault boats on 24-25 April, and held the hills above Verona. On the left the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron screened the left flank of the 10th Mountain Division from the 26th, and Combat Command A crossed the Po on the 25th. Combat Command B and Task Force Howze were assembling to follow toward Highway 11 and northwest Italy; during 24-26 April these latter forces were still south of the Po, Combat Command B north of Reggio and Task Force Howze blocking enemy escape routes as far west as the Taro River, northwest of Parma.

Although Fifth Army was primarily occupied in driving north as swiftly as possible, it could not overlook the sizable block of enemy left in the mountains west and south of Modena. The main drive up Highway 9 to cut off these forces was made by the 34th Division. First the 133d Infantry took Reggio late on the 24th; then the 168th Infantry and the 755th Tank Battalion smashed a small garrison, mainly administrative troops with a few self-propelled guns, at Parma late on the 25th; thereafter the 135th Infantry raced for Piacenza, 45 miles away, and reached its outskirts by the afternoon of the 26th. Here an enemy garrison of Italian SS and German troops held us off until the 28th. In less than three days the 34th Division had pushed its forces 80 miles from Modena to the Po crossings at Piacenza and had split the enemy right in two. To the south of the thin divisional line—"40 miles long and 40 feet wide"—were the 148th Grenadier and Italia Bersaglieri Divisions, trapped at the edge of the Apennines south of Highway 9; to the north was the 232d Grenadier Division, which had managed to cross the highway west of Parma ahead of the 34th Division and assembled to defend itself in the Po loop south of Cremona while slowly negotiating the river by ferry. The 34th Division, strung out as it was between three relatively intact divisions, was in no enviable position, yet the very fact that we could get away with such a maneuver illustrates clearly the end of the German armies as an organized fighting force.

The lack of communication between the three enemy divisions and their low state of morale at this juncture enabled the 34th Division during 26-28 April to block off the Piacenza escape route on the northwest, and at the same time to devote the 133d and 168th Infantry to the systematic destruction of the 232d Grenadier Division south of Cremona. By the end of the 27th, after two days of attack from all sides which inflicted heavy casualties in men and material, the 232d Grenadier Division expired as a fighting force when a regimental commander surrendered with his whole command; only part of the division had gotten across the Po. At this point the 34th Division was moved out of the Highway 9 zone, and the remaining enemy divisions were left to surrender to the Brazilians a few days later.

The Brazilian 1st Division, after emerging into the Po Plain south of Modena on the 23d, swung to the northwest at the very edge of the Apennines parallel to and south of Highway 9 and

the 34th Division. The change in direction pinched out the 371st Infantry, which reverted to Fifth Army control and moved to Modena to guard prisoners on the 26th. Once the plain was reached advances were rapid against slight opposition until the 26th, when the division reconnaissance units and the 200 partisans working with them ran into elements of the 148th Grenadier and Italia Bersaglieri Divisions at the town of Collechia south of Parma. A serious fire fight developed, but the town was cleared with a bag of 300 prisoners after reinforcements were brought up.

This engagement was the beginning of the end of the two divisions trapped south of Highway 9. After failing in an attempt on the 27th south of Parma to break through the 34th Division to the Po the 148th Grenadier Division pulled back up the Taro Valley into the hills around Fornovo. Heavy fighting continued there for two more days as the Brazilians mopped up the recalcitrant enemy. At 1800, 29 April, the commanding generals of both the 148th Grenadier and Italia Bersaglieri Divisions formally surrendered to the Brazilians. By the 30th over 13,000 prisoners, 4,000 horses, and 1,000 trucks were taken. Meanwhile the Brazilian 1st Division had assumed the 34th Division zone north of Highway 9 on the 28th; its 1st Infantry advanced to Piacenza, and a battalion of its 11th Infantry moved up to finish off the pocket south of Cremona.

As IV Corps was gathering at the Po on 23 April, II Corps units were moving across the Panaro, still some 20 miles south of the Po. The following day II Corps arrived at the Po three divisions abreast and immediately prepared to cross. On the left the 88th Division moved over the river at Revere, using the wrecked railroad bridge in addition to assault craft, DUKWs, LCVs, and Alligators. Some opposition was met, and the enemy made ineffectual efforts in the night to hinder our consolidation by scattered bombing and strafing. The next morning the 88th Division started the 20-mile march for Verona by foot, jeeps, captured vehicles, and bicycles. At 2210, after a march of 40 miles in 16 hours, the 2d Battalion, 351st Infantry, and light armor reached the south outskirts of the city; by daylight on the 26th the city was cleared.

Late on the 24th the 91st Division crossed at Sermide and pushed toward Cerea and Legnago. At Cerea the 361st Infantry fought a weird night-long engagement with a large enemy column of trucks and artillery trying to force a passage north through

the town. Fortunately the Germans were more confused than the 361st Infantry, and by morning they had been cut to pieces with appalling losses in equipment and personnel. Movement from Cerea to the Adige was without further incident. The 2d Battalion, 363d Infantry, cleared Legnago by noon on the 26th and began crossing the Adige River immediately. Farther to the right the 6 South African Armoured Division established a bridgehead over the Po at Felonica on the 25th.

By 26 April Fifth Army had split in two the German forces in Italy. In IV Corps the 10th Mountain Division blocked off routes to the Brenner between Lake Garda and Verona; the 85th Division on the corps right was moving through Verona to attack the Adige Line defenses in the hills north of the city; and on the left Combat Command A was racing north past Mantua toward Brescia with the intention of swinging northwest toward Como. South of the Po River, as Combat Command B continued mopping up north of Parma, the 34th Division and the Brazilian 1st Division had cut across the path of retreat for two enemy divisions on the line Piacenza–Parma. On the Army right II Corps held the line of the Adige from Verona south to Legnago with the 88th and 91st Divisions, and crossings were in progress. The 6 South African Armoured Division on the II Corps right, with two brigades still to cross the Po, was advancing to Adige crossings south of Legnago. Along the Ligurian Sea the troops under the 92d Division, after reducing the last Gothic Line position on the 25th, were racing toward Genoa.<sup>5</sup> Eighth Army, which had started across the Po on the 25th, was pushing some elements toward the Adige in its zone.

New orders from General Truscott on the 26th directed Fifth Army to cut off and destroy the German forces in northwest Italy and to assist Eighth Army in the capture of Padua. The main attack was to drive across the Adige and through the defenses of the Adige Line before they could be manned by the Germans. II Corps was to swing eastward on the axis Verona–Vicenza to assist Eighth Army in the capture of Padua and to block escape routes to the mountains which might be used by enemy forces along the Adriatic. IV Corps was to send one division north along the eastern shores of Lake Garda on the axis Verona–Trent–Bolzano toward the Brenner Pass exit and into the "Central Redoubt" frequently mentioned in enemy propaganda as the site for the last-ditch stand of the beleaguered German armies;

the 1st Armored Division was to continue its drive northwest along the edge of the Alps to Lake Como; and the Brazilian 1st and U. S. 34th Divisions were to finish the clean-up job south of the Po.

The drive of the last six days as Fifth Army fanned out to finish off the enemy was designed to capture as many of the enemy as possible in the valley and to forestall the formation of the Tyrolean army reportedly being organized in the mountains. Neither the Adige River nor the nearly unmanned defenses on its eastern bank proved a serious obstacle to our forces. The very fact that our units could practically at will drive across country 20 miles a day indicates clearly enough the state of the enemy disorganization. The Germans still tried to get as many troops as they could out of the valley to the comparative safety of the Alps, and single units often fought fiercely to cover their retreat; in no case, however, did those actions constitute a real threat to the advances of our columns. Not infrequently our rear columns found places taken and cleared by leading elements again in the hands of the enemy. The simple fact was that no front lines existed, and the countryside swarmed with Germans from a wide variety of units, many apathetically awaiting capture and others attempting to pass unobserved through our thin lines and into the mountains.

II Corps crossed the Adige 26-28 April on a broad front of three divisions, each operating in several high-speed motorized and armored columns. Vicenza, the first objective, was cleared on the 28th after hard fighting by the 350th Infantry. The corps attack then spread north, and the 88th Division, which had been travelling astride Highway 53, fanned out to the left into the hills and up the Brenta and Piave river valleys north of Bassano and Treviso. The 85th Division, attached to II Corps on 30 April, took over the job of moving up the Piave Valley on 1 May; the 88th Division was thus enabled to concentrate its efforts on the Brenta Valley and the roads leading into it in accordance with Army orders of 1 May which directed II Corps to push north and seize Highway 49, preparatory to continuing the advance on Innsbruck via the Brenner Pass. On the corps right the 91st and 6 South African Armoured Divisions drove east, the 91st Division reaching Treviso on the 30th. Since the South Africans had made contact with Eighth Army at Padua on the 29th, our push in this direction had taken II Corps to the end of the Fifth Army

zone; the advance was halted, and while the 91st Division continued to mop up enemy resistance in its area the South Africans assembled and started movement to the Milan area. The move was still in progress on the 2d.

In the Army center IV Corps units moved out to breach the Adige Line and to block off the exits from Lake Garda to Lake Como. On the 26th the 85th Division simply walked through the Adige Line north of Verona and then reverted to Army reserve to assist either corps in Fifth Army if the bold thrusts east, north, and west ran into difficulty. The 10th Mountain Division moved up the east shore of Lake Garda toward the exits of the Brenner Pass and in the demolished tunnels of the east lake shore drive ran into the most difficult fighting it had experienced since the breakthrough in the Apennines. Against fierce opposition the division, operating under Army control after 28 April, reached the head of Lake Garda by the 30th. Meanwhile the 85th Mountain Infantry made an amphibious operation across the lake to Gargnano on the 30th in a vain effort to catch some high Fascist officials, including Mussolini. The Fascists were gone, but the regiment continued unopposed along the western shores of the lake to Riva. By 2 May the 86th Mountain Infantry had established road blocks at Arco, five miles north of the lake.

In the western part of the Po Valley IV Corps concentrated on the considerable problem presented by the German LXXV Corps under Lt. Gen. Ernst Schlemmer, an intact block of two divisions (34th Grenadier and 5th Mountain Divisions) which had been guarding the Franco-Italian frontier and was now withdrawing northeast past Turin under constant partisan attack.<sup>6</sup> If this body were to be held in the Po Valley, quick efforts would have to be made to secure all the northern exits into the mountains as far as the Swiss frontier, and as many troops as possible brought up to man a defensive line against any attempts of the desperate enemy to break through our dikes.

On the 26th Combat Command A started northwest and rolled through Brescia and Bergamo to Como on the western arm of Lake Como two days later; en route it met only scattered opposition. Combat Command B followed across the Po on the 27th, drove to the Ghedi Airfield south of Brescia, and then swung west on an axis south of and parallel to that of Combat Command A. On the 29th, the same day that Troop B, 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, found Milan in the hands of the partisans,

the 1st Armored Division consolidated positions north and east of that city: Combat Command A on the right, Combat Command B on the left, Task Force Howze in the center, and the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron patrolling on the left flank. By the 29th this latter unit had pushed to the Ticino River, which might prove a good line on which to hold LXXV Corps. The next day a IV Corps task force formally occupied Milan.

In three days the 1st Armored Division, roaring across country day and night against only scattered opposition, had driven a wedge between enemy forces in the mountains and those still in the plain. In order to strengthen the long, thin line the 1st Armored Division had drawn across the top of the valley and to assist in mopping up the large enemy forces west of Milan, the 34th Division, relieved from its guard of Highway 9, moved swiftly across the Po and toward Bergamo on the 28th, followed by the Legnano Group on the 30th to Brescia. On 1 May the 34th Division relieved 1st Armored Division reconnaissance elements on the Ticino River northwest of Milan. It then took Novara west of the Ticino the next day against no opposition; elements were also sent northwest 30 miles to Biella at the edge of the western Alpine chain. Drawing the noose across the top of the valley on the line Ticino River–Novara–Biella left surrender as the only alternative to LXXV Corps, which was concentrating northeast of Turin and south of the 34th Division.

Fifth Army's long thrust straight north from the Apennines to Lake Garda and thence across the top of the valley to the east and west had first split the German armies in Italy in two and then slammed in their faces the door of retreat to the Alps. During that same period three other nearly separate drives were in progress: on the east the British Eighth Army chased the Germans north along the Adriatic coast; on the west the 92d Division pursued along the Ligurian coast to Genoa; and south of the Po the Brazilian 1st Division and for a while the 34th Division rounded up enemy forces caught in the Apennines. The latter project was completed successfully by the 29th, and on the next two days the Brazilian 1st Division fanned out to Alessandria and Cremona.

Along the Ligurian coast the troops under the 92d Division had by the 22d seized all but the Aulla stronghold in the old Gothic Line, and the enemy began to withdraw hastily. Inland the

370th Infantry pushed northeast down Highways 62 and 63, thereby bringing pressure on the 148th Grenadier and Italia Bersaglieri Divisions from the rear while they were being squeezed from the north by the Brazilians and the 34th Division. On Highway 1 the 473d and 442d Infantry sped up the coast to Genoa by 0930, 27 April. The city garrison, 4,000 troops commanded by General Meinholt, had already surrendered to the partisans the day before, but the port garrison and a detachment of marines on top of a hill overlooking the harbor held out until the next day, when a threat of annihilation brought them around. On the right the 442d Infantry moved swiftly around Genoa 30 miles to the north into the Lombardy Plain to capture Alessandria and its garrison of 3,000 men on the 28th. There contact was established with the Brazilians; contact between the 92d Division and IV Corps had already been made at Pavia. Turin had been cleared by the partisans on the 28th and was reached by our troops on the 30th; on the same day the 473d Infantry met French colonial troops on the coast. By that time the Germans in northwest Italy were surrendering on every side.

The other main drive, that of Eighth Army on the right, reached the Po on the 24th. Efforts to trap the enemy south of the Po by a junction with Fifth Army at Bondeno were not entirely successful, for the 1st and 4th Parachute Divisions, the 26th Panzer Division, and the 278th Grenadier Division somehow managed to get across the Po in relatively good condition but with little armor or artillery. Nevertheless, enemy losses in personnel and equipment before Eighth Army south of the Po were very large. On the 25th Eighth Army crossed the Po, and on the 27th the Adige. The enemy, however, offered fierce resistance before relinquishing Padua to Indian troops and Venice to the 2 New Zealand Division, both on the 29th. Eighth Army had now virtually destroyed the German Tenth Army and was driving rapidly toward Austria and Yugoslavia. The 6 Armoured Division seized a bridge over the Piave southwest of Conegliano on the 30th, and the New Zealanders established a bridgehead farther south. At 1500, 1 May, the 2 New Zealand Division established contact with troops of the Yugoslavian Army at Monfalcone less than 20 miles northwest of Trieste. By 2 May, when hostilities ceased, the armor had fanned out northwest and east of Udine, and the New Zealanders had entered Trieste at 1600, there to mop up the last embers of German resistance.

## 6. EPILOGUE

### 2 May-2 October 1945

On 2 May hostilities in Italy ceased in accordance with terms of unconditional surrender signed by representatives of General Vietinghoff, Commander-in-Chief of Army Group Southwest, at Caserta on 29 April. The formal surrender in Italy was the beginning of the end for the Third Reich; one week later the war in Europe was concluded with complete victory for the United Nations. The grinding Italian campaign had been climaxed after 20 dreary months with a final, smashing offensive which in 19 days reduced two formidable armies firmly entrenched in a mountain line into a fleeing rabble with neither defenses, organization, nor equipment. Influenced by political and economic rather than military considerations, the Germans had refused to shorten their lines by giving ground before the attack. That proved their undoing; when their lines were broken, they lost both north Italy and their entire army.

The formal surrender was largely an acknowledgment of an already chaotic disorganization in the enemy forces. We had taken some 7,000 prisoners in the mountains, and the number increased tremendously as Fifth Army raced to the Po. On the 29th the 148th Grenadier and Italia Bersaglieri Divisions surrendered. The same day Maj. Gen. Max Pemsel, chief of staff of the Italo-German Army of Liguria, signed surrender terms in the absence of the Army Commander, Marshal Graziani, who had been captured by partisans. Pemsel himself had been out of communication with his army for forty-eight hours. Graziani, who was released to IV Corps that night, confirmed the action of his chief of staff and ordered his two corps commanders to lay down their arms. Maj. Gen. Curt Jahn of Corps Lombardy complied on the 30th, but the commander of LXXV Corps, General Schlemmer, demurred because of a personal oath to Hitler. By the 30th, when Genoa surrendered, General Schlemmer's corps, 40,000 strong, was the last of the German forces in northwest Italy. Schlemmer gathered his troops in a small area northeast of Turin; announcement of Hitler's death came on 1 May, and the general, also influenced by IV Corps preparations to smash him, took that as his cue to enter negotiations. His capitulation marked the end of resistance in western Italy, and surrender throughout the Peninsula was complete the next day.

Announcement, however, of the German surrender on 2 May did not bring an automatic end to hostilities in Italy. The higher

headquarters of the enemy were not in touch with all of their subordinate units, notification of our own advance guards was not everywhere accomplished by 1400, and some groups of die-hard fanatics were reluctant to surrender even after being informed of the capitulation at Caserta. II Corps had sent out orders to its divisions late on 2 May to halt in place wherever resistance was encountered; on the following day it reported that the 1st Parachute Division west of Borgo was unwilling to give in. Some elements stated they had no orders to surrender and would oppose our advance. During the 3d medium bombers dropped leaflets in areas where the terms of surrender were likely to be unknown to the enemy, and a little opportunity for reflection convinced the most stubborn Nazi adherents that the battle was truly ended in Italy. Despite a few skirmishes the great bulk of the enemy engaged in no further fighting after 2 May and was willing, even eager, to obey any orders issued by our commanders.

On 3 May the 85th and 88th Divisions sent task forces north over ice and snow three feet deep to seal the Austrian frontier and to gain contact with the American Seventh Army, driving southward from Germany. The 339th Infantry under Lt. Col. John T. English reached Austrian soil east of Dobbiaco at 0415, 4 May; the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon, 349th Infantry, met troops from VI Corps of Seventh Army at 1051 at Vipiteno, nine miles south of Brennero. The 338th Infantry came up Highway 12 later in the day and placed a frontier guard at Brennero on the Austro-Italian frontier. To the west the 10th Mountain Division reached Nauders beyond the Resia Pass on the 5th and made contact with German forces which were being pushed south by Seventh Army; here a *status quo* was maintained until the enemy headquarters involved had completed their surrender to Seventh Army. On the 6th the mountain troops met the 44th Infantry Division of Seventh Army. Inasmuch as Eighth Army had met Marshal Tito's forces on 1 May at Monfalcone and the 473d Infantry had encountered French troops on 30 April near Savona on the Italian Riviera, the Allied armies in Italy had now made complete contact with friendly forces on the western, northern, and eastern frontiers of Italy and controlled all major routes of egress.

As combat activities dwindled, new types of duties and prob-

lems arose to occupy Fifth Army and kept it busy throughout the summer. For the next few months the main activities of the Army were concerned with three general issues: (1) the efficient disposition and use of the German surrendered forces; (2) the problems arising from the occupation of northern Italy; and (3) the redeployment of the Army to the U.S. and the Pacific.

After the collection and disarmament of some 250,000 Germans in the mountains of the Army zone, Fifth Army proceeded to organize its share of the surrendered forces into labor units to take the place of redeployed service troops. By 15 July the Army had lost in redeployment 19 of the 28 ordnance units which it had on 8 May, and 80 percent of all ordnance work in Fifth Army was being done by German units under American supervision. At this time only three American quartermaster units remained in the Army; here also the bulk of supply was being carried out by German units. In early August German service troops under Fifth Army included 14 engineer, 34 ordnance, 47 quartermaster, 13 signal, and 33 transportation units.

Though the Fifth Army zone of occupation in northern Italy included all of the large cities in continental Italy except Venice and Trieste, very little trouble arose in the area. Victory parades were held by the partisans, who turned in the bulk of their arms; the underground enemy rings were smashed by our counterintelligence personnel; and the displaced persons in the area were handled largely by Italian agencies. The general situation was sufficiently favorable by 15 July for Fifth Army to be able to turn over part of its zone to the Allied Commission; on 4 August responsibility for Allied military government in the rest of the Army area also passed to the Commission.

Only in the Trieste area did real trouble arise. The problem of relations with Yugoslav forces was handled by Eighth Army and by higher headquarters, but required the use of Fifth Army troops. The 91st Division moved to Venezia Giulia on 4 May, the 10th Mountain Division on 19 May, and II Corps on 21 May. During the week 14-21 May, 5,300 tons of ammunition were placed in the Udine area, enough to support 2 infantry divisions, 2 tank battalions, 2 tank destroyer battalions, 2 155mm howitzer battalions, and 1 155mm gun battalion for 5 days. When our general line was advanced to the east on 22-23 May, a flare-up of Yugoslav protests and threats ensued and resulted in an alert for the 85th Division. By mid-June the situation had quieted down,

and the 85th Division was relieved from its alert status on 14 June. An agreement had been reached by this time establishing a general line of demarcation along the Isonzo River; joint American and British occupation continued in the area west of the river. By July the American share in this occupation was reduced to one division, first the 34th Division and later the 88th Division.

Policies on redeployment were laid down by the War Department, and their general execution was mainly a theater problem; Fifth Army supervised the actual reorganization and preparation of units for shipment. This task was in itself a formidable one, complicated by the fact that the Army had to remain operative so as to carry out its post-surrender missions; also the general War Department policy of separating out high-score individuals for eventual discharge involved a great deal of reshuffling of personnel. The service units of Fifth Army, in particular, had been overseas so long that finding sufficient low-score replacements with specialized training for engineer and ordnance units was difficult. Every effort, however, was made to deal justly with all personnel and at the same time to meet the schedules for redeployment. By September the bulk of the Fifth Army combat units had left Italy, and on 9 September Headquarters, Fifth Army, became non-operational, two years after the landings at Salerno. On the 21st it sailed for the United States from Leghorn; on 2 October Fifth Army was inactivated at Camp Myles Standish in Massachusetts.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER XI

<sup>1</sup>Army transportation at this time was made up of 26 truck companies, each equipped with 42 2½-ton trucks, and 5 companies equipped with 42 10-ton semitrailers, making a total of 1092 2½-ton trucks and 210 10-ton semitrailers available to carry approximately 5000 tons of supplies each day on an estimated transport run of 125 miles. In addition 15 pack-mule companies were ready to move supplies into mountainous areas where vehicles could not operate.

<sup>2</sup>Official Army time from 0200, 2 April, was B Time, two hours ahead of Greenwich Standard Time (Z).

<sup>3</sup>During 22-26 April our air force directed 2122 sorties against the enemy. Weather greatly curtailed air activity on the 27th; thereafter the beginning of mass surrenders reduced the available targets. In the week ending with the fall of Bologna, Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force flew 11,903 sorties of all types on the Allied front in Italy, the greatest single week's effort during the Italian campaign.

<sup>4</sup>It may be noted that all armor had to use the ponton bridge, for the M1 treadway bridge was too narrow for the M24 light tank and too light for the medium tanks.

<sup>5</sup>Since Fifth Army could no longer control this thrust because of the length of communication lines, the 92d Division was now under control of 15th Army Group, the headquarters of which were in Florence.

<sup>6</sup>The partisans in northwest Italy were directed on 26 April to launch their all-out efforts. Genoa fell to them on the same day; Turin and Milan on the 28th. It may be noted that the Detachment of the Alps of the French Army was putting pressure on LXXV Corps from the west.

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## CHAPTER XII

# LOOKING BACK

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### 1. THE MEN

THE amazing thing about the Italian campaign is the fact that it was fought and won by men who had little idea of why they were fighting. This statement is true at least of the average American soldier of Fifth Army, though even here exceptions did occur. The Nisei of the 100th Battalion and the 442d Regimental Combat Team knew that they were battling to redeem their friends and relatives at home from unjust prejudice, and so these men laid down their lives before the German machine guns in almost prodigal abandon. On the other hand the Negroes of the 92d Division, insufficiently motivated to battle, did not perform as well as might be hoped. Between these extremes was the great bulk of the Fifth Army troops, fighting carefully and well, rapidly becoming veterans, but not at all clear as to the background of the campaign or indeed of the war.

The most persistent and thoughtful attempts by the military agencies of education and information to indoctrinate the soldiers—by posters, pamphlets, movies, and all the other agencies of propaganda—were only of limited success in this regard. Of more avail, as far as the front-line troops were concerned, was the physical presence of a dangerous enemy beyond the hill or on the other side of the valley. The infantry did not like the Krauts with their burp guns, Screaming Meemies, 88s, and infernal mines; but even here the enmity was as often coupled with a grudging admiration for German tenacity and the well designed enemy equipment as with a besetting, emotional hatred. Both on the front and still more in the rear our troops hated the enemy perhaps most because he was the reason for their being away from home in the Army, in a foreign land under unpleasant conditions.

Equally interesting is the fact that among those soldiers who thought about the campaign the official justifications for the war in Italy carried little weight. Many of the officers and men felt that the Italian campaign was a horrible mistake or that at most we should have seized Naples and the Foggia airfields, then gone no farther. Sometimes this attitude was a mere expression of dis-

content, but it cannot be dismissed as being no more; for often it was well and cogently argued. The loss of interest at home in the Italian campaign after the invasion of France could not but reinforce this attitude, and the bitter check in the mountains north of the Gothic Line heightened it even more.

One factor which always entered into the soldier's thinking was his contempt for Italy and things Italian. Hatred this feeling could hardly be called, for the Americans were not deeply concerned by Italy's part as an enemy in the war. The ignominious surrender in September 1943 was taken as typical of Italian courage and endurance, and the high rate of desertion in the Fascist divisions we met in the winter of 1944-45 appeared another indication of instability and lack of powerful convictions in the Italian people. During the first fall and winter, while Fifth Army was still close to the Campanian Plain, the contempt was at its height and not without some justification, for the teeming populace of the region about the squalid city of Naples appeared content to beg and to steal, leaving unrepaired the broken bridges, demolished buildings, and ruined railroads. The creaking oxcarts on the roads, the stone villages with their narrow streets and ancient odors, the backward ways of rural life, the lack of mechanical progress everywhere—all these grated on men raised in the United States. The *Bambini* yelling for "Caramelli" and the easy daughters of the south both mitigated and reinforced the dislike; nor could the evident hunger and poverty bring more than temporary compassion.

As our troops drove north in the summer of 1944 into the more alert and progressive areas of central Italy, the distaste for Italian ways and culture lessened somewhat. The next spring a brief contact with the cities of the Po Valley, where railroads and streetcars were still running at our entry, gave at least some soldiers a better impression of Italy. Nevertheless, the men of Fifth Army who desired insistently to marry the girls of Italy were few, and those who learned more than a few simple phrases of the language were rare. Justified or not in their bases of judgment, the troops did not like Italy. In many cases the contrast with their homeland stiffened their pride in being Americans and in the American way.

The Americans of Fifth Army had contact with other nationalities as well in the form of the fighting contingents of British (including Dominions), French, and Brazilian origin. Officially

the attitude toward these Allies was friendly, and there were indeed no severe clashes between troops of different origin; but a truthful account cannot hide the fact that divergences in methods of fighting and thinking brought occasional difficulties. Fifth Army probably had the least trouble with its Brazilians, trained and equipped on the American model, for the Brazilian contingent was not large and was not employed in an important part of the line; the main difficulties experienced here were the inadequate training received by Brazilian units before arrival in Italy and the always lax supply discipline of the individual Brazilian soldiers.

With respect to supply and administration the French likewise caused little trouble, for they were equipped and organized on the American system. Americans had a wholehearted respect for the battle qualities of the French soldier and for the absorption in fighting of the FEC; no other nationality had as little overhead in supply and command channels. French soldiers might be a little careless with equipment—a French 2½-ton truck on the road was a dangerous object indeed—and the *goumiers* once in a while engaged in inexcusable mass raping of Italian women; otherwise the main problem in relations with the French came in a national difference in tactics. The French tended to drive swiftly forward to their key objectives, by-passing and leaving in their rear considerable pockets of the enemy. American troops for the most part were methodical and were sometimes surprised by these pockets on their flanks. In the battle of Cassino, when the 142d Infantry moved up to reinforce the 3d Algerian Division, our troops ran into considerable opposition in the upper Rapido Valley, an area which the French had already traversed.

American tactics were perhaps more similar to those of the British than to those of the French. Even on the front lines, however, the two English-speaking peoples did not always get along well; in the rear and on higher levels of command the differences in ways of action sometimes brought irritation akin to anger. This is not the place to engage in a lengthy study of the national characteristics of Americans *versus* British; in the military field the problem of cooperation and coordination often seemed to revolve about one of three differences: (1) that the British were more deliberate, but not necessarily more thorough; (2) that the British had a great deal more battle experience in this war than the Americans; and (3) that the Americans had in many respects

much better and certainly more abundant equipment and supplies.

On the front the British were more thorough in planning their attacks than the Americans and tended to launch their assaults under very heavy artillery preparations. The speed with which Eighth Army and other British units followed up their success or breakthrough was often more deliberate than desired by the Fifth Army command, but the difficulty seemed to lie mainly in the less efficient British transport and the inability of the engineers to open up roads and put in bridges—though it must not be forgotten that the invaluable Bailey bridge was a British invention. Behind the lines the British supply and administrative installations and echelons could never be fully integrated into the American set-up, and the two systems existed side by side with some duplications and overlappings. At headquarters commanding both British and American troops British increments were dovetailed into the American staff system, completely in the G-2 and G-3 sections, less fully in G-1 and G-4. In intelligence work and in several other specialties the experience of our allies was drawn on heavily for experts and plans throughout part or all of the Italian campaign.

There is no point in disguising the fact that the association of British and Americans in Fifth Army brought rancor and unjustified suspicions sometimes as well as mutual understanding and appreciation. Both on the staff and command levels of Fifth Army one could find the impression that British commanders tended to spare the lives of their men unduly. The seeming arrogance of British officers and men—Limeys—in rest areas was probably counterbalanced by the ostentation and lavish spending of the better-paid Americans; neither added to an international understanding. Yet, to keep the picture clear after mentioning these difficulties, one must reiterate the fact that Fifth Army functioned successfully as an international army and that internal troubles never seriously hindered the execution of its mission to defeat the enemy.

Both Americans and British discovered that the long Italian campaign required considerable attention to the problem of keeping up the morale of the soldiers. On the American side Fifth Army was the first field army to establish large-scale rest areas, first at Caserta, then at Rome, later at Florence, and in the summer of 1945 at several points in the Po Valley and on the Italian Riviera. Unlike World War I, when individual soldiers were given passes

to the big cities of France, in this war units received quotas and dispatched their due number of men to a rest center in a body. The general philosophy governing operations of the rest centers was expressed by General Truscott as being an attempt to help the soldier forget the Army for a while; accordingly every effort was made to provide pleasant quarters, manifold conveniences, and numerous diversions. Morale depended also on food and mail from home, and equal attention was paid to both, to obtain the favorite foods of the American soldier and to deliver his mail as speedily as possible. With refrigerator trucks, sock-washing installations, and even divisional gin distilleries, Fifth Army resembled a huge, portable business both in fighting and in relaxation.

The American soldier came from a mechanized, industrial, but nevertheless individualistic democracy—a point which could never be forgotten in dealing with him and his needs. Considerable efforts had to be made to procure the personal supplies he demanded, such as post-exchange items and above all cigarettes; and a safety vent for the free expression of his complaints and ideas was provided in the form of the Mediterranean edition of *Stars and Stripes*. The letter columns and editorials of this newspaper and also of the magazine *Yank*, together with the masterful Mauldin cartoons which appeared regularly in *Stars and Stripes*, furnished a barometer of the soldiers' opinion which could not be overlooked, though they might irritate some commanders and officers.<sup>1</sup> The Army command, however, was deeply concerned with its duties of leading soldiers of a democracy and fostered the circulation of the army periodicals as well as the education of its men by a multitude of other methods.

Despite all irritations and dislikes the Fifth Army soldier was not openly or sullenly discontented with his life. At all times soldiers in war have grumbled in greater or lesser degree, yet always the average man adjusts himself as well as he can to his surroundings and tries hard to enjoy life. So too in Italy. That enjoyment was somewhat hectic and unnatural, even pathetic, but it represented an attempt to rise above the mud, the mountains, the dull routine, and the sharp periods of fear. During the first winter in Italy units were somewhat slow to seek comfort in their daily living; but by the second year our troops learned much about the little ways in which life could be made more pleasant.

## 2. THE FIGHTING

The extent to which the tactics and strategy of the Italian campaign will influence future military thinking cannot be assessed as yet. During the war itself the experience of Fifth Army was of considerable value; for almost a year our troops in Italy formed the field laboratory of the American army in Europe, and much may be found in official reports of our activities and our use of the new weapons and equipment. Within Fifth Army itself endless debates raged over the relative efficiency of German and American weapons, the use of air power, and a host of other subjects connected with the military revolutions of World War II.

In many ways the Fifth Army experience was unique during the war, for ours was above all a mountain campaign. Except for relatively brief interludes the men of Fifth Army fought in the mountains and rugged hills of the Italian Peninsula, where one peak looks down on another in a seemingly endless chain. In the fall of 1943 Fifth Army was the most mechanized force ever to go to war, yet its soldiers fought more as individuals than in any war of recent times. Instead of trench warfare or mass tank attacks, the battles of the Italian campaign consisted of individuals crawling up hillsides, warily evading the mines, ducking the German mortar shells, closing with the enemy to drive him from his bunkers. The infantry were aided by all the modern developments of the machine—by tanks, artillery, aircraft, trucks, and jeeps—but the battle was still won by the individual soldier. On his morale, training, and endurance depended the success of the local action and of the campaign.

The tactics were thus above all small-unit tactics. A drive might start on the Army level, but time after time it would dissolve in the cut-up mountains into isolated actions by companies, platoons, and even squads, separated from each other by ravines and ridges and focussed on an individual German bunker or machine-gun position. Aid from the rear in such warfare could consist only of encouragement and the forwarding of supplies by mules and carriers, with occasional assistance from a suddenly swooping airplane or an artillery concentration directed by the artillery forward observer. The location of our scattered units could seldom be given precisely; forward troops had always to be prepared for all-around defense. When mud and rain were added to the pattern of mountain warfare, each advance became incredibly difficult.

The troops of Fifth Army learned a great deal about mountain warfare during their twenty months of combat. As late as the summer of 1944 one battalion commander might comment that his division staff still tried to push troops across open ground commanded by the hills on either side, but eventually the lesson was well learned that low ground was a trap until the mountains had been taken. From the supply point of view fighting in the mountains was difficult, but the advantages of blind spots in the enemy fields of fire and the possibilities of infiltration more than counterbalanced this problem; to procure the necessary supplies Fifth Army relied ever more heavily on mules and the engineer improvement of mountain trails. A main highway was a blessing which could supply an entire corps, but even a poor mountain road could maintain an amazing number of troops. The jeep and the 2½-ton truck, together with the engineer bulldozer, stood behind many of our most brilliant achievements in mountain fighting.

Although the "supporting" weapons were decidedly that, they were invaluable even in mountain warfare, and their efficiency steadily improved. Problems of ammunition supply across the hills normally prevented the use of the full allotment of mortars and heavy machine guns in an attack, but those which could be supplied were of inestimable value in screening an advance, beating back a sudden counterattack, or reaching a nasty reverse-slope position of the enemy. Behind these weapons were the infantry cannon company howitzers, the tanks and tank destroyers, and the chemical mortars—the latter a new and very highly esteemed weapon. Tanks and tank destroyers were pushed well forward in the mountains, not to beat off enemy armor so much as to furnish direct, low-trajectory fire on enemy pillboxes and emplacements; except at Salerno and Anzio tank-*versus*-tank engagement on any scale was rare.

Then, farther back in narrow mountain valleys were the artillery pieces, the 105s, the 155s, the Long Toms, the 8-inchers, the great 240mm howitzers. The utmost refinement in observation and fire was necessary in the rocky, mountainous terrain; but once the infantry had felt out the enemy positions artillery ammunition expenditure was restricted only by its availability as our guns searched out the enemy's bunkers, felt for his supply routes, and worked up and down his reverse slopes. With the new developments of this war, both in methods of fire and in such

mechanical improvements as the proximity fuze, our artillery fire grew ever more deadly and hated by the enemy.

The most startling improvements in the support of the infantry came in the development of air-ground support. During the first fall and winter the air attacks on the Winter and Gustav lines and on bridges in the Liri Valley had often failed in accuracy and efficiency, but throughout 1944 the ability of our fighter-bombers and other craft to hit their targets improved amazingly with more experience and better directional aids. As far as Fifth Army was concerned, the introduction and refinement of the Rover Joe technique marked the acme of air-ground support directly in front of our lines. Radar methods of pinpoint bombing even through overcast also extended the effective radius of our air support far behind the enemy front. Since our air power often represented the margin of superiority on the Allied side in Italy, its effective use was of great importance in promoting a breakthrough and most of all in keeping the enemy disorganized during a retreat.

Turning from tactics to strategy, one must admit that the grand strategy of the Italian campaign is open to question on many counts. The overriding issue is the desirability of such a campaign in the first place, and then the problem of whether we should have continued our offensive after the fall of Naples, again after the fall of Rome, and again after being stopped in the Northern Apennines. Dependent upon the answer to this question is one's judgment on the forces used, which were certainly too weak for a sustained offensive and were yet too powerful for a simple defense. In particular the withdrawal of troops from Fifth Army for the attack in south France must appear either as an unwarrantable weakening of the Italian armies before the crucial battle in the Apennines or as a desirable shifting of strength from a lesser to a more important front. It may be doubted if Americans and British can ever reach a common verdict on these points, so intimately connected with the political issues of the war in the Balkans; the sad thing is the feeling one has of compromise in the Italian campaign—of a decision to mount it but not to give it the necessary forces for clear, quick success. If this be true, an unnecessarily bitter struggle and death came to many of our soldiers who fought in the Italian mountains.

Other issues also have arisen or may arise in the future. The

decision on the Gulf of Salerno as an initial invasion point, the bloody crossing of the Rapido, the absorption of our troops in Verdun-like attacks on Cassino, the timing of the landing at Anzio, our loss of contact with a defeated enemy north of Rome, the almost frenzied effort to break through to the Po Plain in October 1944—all these and more too may be debated at length. This volume pretends to do no more than point out the actual circumstances attending each in the hope that accurate evidence on the operations may help in sober judgment on the plans. The only two major operations of Fifth Army which went almost exactly as planned—the breakthrough to Rome in May 1944 and the drive to the Po Valley in April 1945—probably will not be subject to such criticism; these two attacks, indeed, are as masterly as any in the European war.

The geographical limitations can never be forgotten in discussing the strategy of the Italian campaign; the front was always relatively narrow, and open flanks did not exist. Every effort had to start with a frontal attack, and exploitation of a breakthrough was almost always impeded by the mountains. A qualification on this observation may appear to be demanded by the fact that the Allies controlled the sea and so theoretically could strike behind the enemy's flanks at any point.<sup>2</sup> At the end of the war Marshal Kesselring criticized our command for not engaging in such amphibious operations and confessed that he was always concerned for his flanks. In view of the characteristics of the Italian Peninsula—long, narrow, and mountainous—such criticism of our plodding strategy may appear justified. If Kesselring, however, could have inspected the stock of landing craft available to the Italian campaign, his fears would have been allayed; only at Anzio did Fifth Army have an adequate supply of naval craft for a major amphibious landing, or the troops with which to launch it. In fact, then, our control of the sea was useful in assuring supply and in making feints to play on the enemy's fears and so induce him to keep strong coastal guards; on occasion the navy could also assist by naval gunfire on targets just beyond our lines.

In passing, it may be noted that the enemy's commitment in Italy was almost wholly determined by ours and that his strategy is equally open to question. The Germans were willing to fight in Italy and to bleed our forces as much as possible by their slow retreat up the long reach of the Peninsula, but only at Salerno and

at Anzio did they switch to the offensive. Both times they failed; and one feels that the strategic and tactical ability of the enemy was sometimes overestimated by our soldiers. If the enemy seemed to conduct masterly retreats, it must be remembered that he had the powerful weapons of demolition, mines, and mountains to slow our pursuit and to allow him time in which to regroup his shattered forces. Several times the German generals seem to have been more concerned with holding ground than maintaining a sound position, and so delayed their retreats too long.

The individual German soldiers deserved praise for their defensive skill, but often they had only to sit in their well-nigh impregnable position and await our attack. Not that all the German defenses were well planned; prisoners passed harsh judgments on the Dora Line near Esperia, and one bitter officer wished that the Todt organization had had to defend the Gothic Line which it had built. When taken prisoner, the Germans did not loom up as members of a master race but as poor folk akin to our own soldiers, caught in the same web of circumstance. In warfare there is no such thing as fairness on either side, so the Germans on the Italian front cannot be censured for their tricks; yet the scattered instances of the misuse of the Red Cross and the white flag were certainly in direct contravention of emphatic orders from the enemy command. In many ways the most impressive part of the German defense in Italy, and the one most worth studying, was the enemy's ability to keep on fighting and supplying his troops despite our complete air superiority.

If victory is the final justification of a line of strategy, then the Fifth Army campaign in Italy is eminently justified. The obstacles of terrain, weather, and enemy opposition were severe, and the course of the battle which has been sketched in the chapters of this book was a grueling, heartbreaking effort; but at the end the Allied forces in Italy stood on the Alps, and all Germans in Italy were our prisoners. Nor can it be denied that the Italian struggle was veritably a cancer in the enemy's side; from D-day at Salerno to 2 May 1945 Fifth Army had captured 212,112 prisoners. How many Germans had died or had been wounded cannot yet be estimated.

Another set of figures, however, must never be forgotten by anyone writing on the Italian campaign: our victory cost the 27 divisions and 7 corps at one time or another in Fifth Army a total of 188,746 casualties.<sup>8</sup> Now and for long in the future,

fields and roads, villages and cities of Italy will bear the marks of the fiercest war ever fought in that Peninsula, and the names of many of those villages will have a familiar, fateful ring in America. Salerno, San Pietro, Cassino, Anzio, Santa Maria, Livergnano—these places now are woven into the history of American valor and endurance.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER XII

<sup>1</sup>Like all other parts of the American Army, Fifth Army had its debates over the class system separating officers from men; as elsewhere there were real and imagined grievances, but the subject cannot be pursued further in these pages.

<sup>2</sup>In view of the three-dimensional character of modern war, it must be noted that the Allies could also have struck by air at the enemy's rear; but the mountainous terrain and the lack of airborne troops limited such operations to the Avellino drop in September 1943.

<sup>3</sup>Broken down by nationalities, the figures are:

	Killed in Action	Wounded in Action	Missing in Action	Total
American	19,475	80,530	9,637	109,642
British	6,605	29,977	10,870	47,452
French	5,241	20,847	1,583	27,671
Brazilian	275	1,901	235	2,411
Italian	290	770	510	1,570
	<hr/> 81,886	<hr/> 184,025	<hr/> 22,835	<hr/> 188,746

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## APPENDIX 1

# BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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### THE OFFICIAL RECORDS

The *Fifth Army History*, from which this volume has been drawn almost in its entirety, was written on the basis of terrain reconnaissance, interviews, and thorough research in the official records. First-hand observation of modern battle is well-nigh impossible, but at various times members of the Historical Section spent considerable periods with forward elements.

Primarily the *History* relies upon the written records submitted monthly by the Army general staff sections, the corps, the divisions and their component parts, and the numerous independent Army and corps units. These records consisted normally of three parts: (1) the journal, a day-by-day log of messages received from higher, lower, and adjacent units by telephone, radio, or messenger, together with orders, movements, observers' reports, and the like; (2) the journal file, a dossier of supporting papers including the actual messages, orders, overlays of positions, situation and intelligence reports, and other material; (3) the narrative, an account in connected form of the unit's activities, tying together the material of the journal and giving a background of terrain, intentions, and commanders' observations. The bulk of this material was extensive, and any one event might be described or reported in a number of different sources.

In the preparation of the *History* the greatest weight was placed on the journals and journal files of the infantry regiments and the divisional field artillery battalions as being the records closest to the event, but the records of all units were collated carefully in accordance with sound historical principles. Anyone familiar with the operations of a headquarters in the field will realize the gaps in these records and the problems caused by the stress of battle and the fatigue of the men. The unit records must be very carefully checked, but it may also be pointed out that they are and will remain the best available sources. In addition the writers of the *History* had available special reports and summaries of action from independent commands such as the naval and air forces involved and adjacent ground units. Discussions of Army logistics were based partly on interviews with the relevant staff sections, partly on bi-monthly (later weekly) reports by the special staff sections, and partly on the written histories of the G-4, medical, quartermaster, and engineer sections.

Detailed references to the official records have not been included either in the original *Fifth Army History* or in this volume. These records were not given definite file numbers until they reached the War Department; also, access to the files is likely to be limited for a considerable period in the future, and references which cannot be checked are of little value except as giving an air of seeming reliability. Those researchers who do have access to the historical files of the War Department will have little difficulty in finding the bases of the story as presented herein by consulting the monthly reports of the appropriate units for the period in question.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

## POPULAR ACCOUNTS

Beyond the official records other evidence is available, and more will undoubtedly be made available in the future. One has, for instance, the accounts by reporters in the newspapers and magazines of the United States and also in the Mediterranean edition of *Stars and Stripes*. Such material may at times give the color of the action, but almost always the dating, places, and units will be obscured by military censorship and by the requirements of modern journalism. Newspaper and magazine articles, even those in *Stars and Stripes*, must be used very carefully; they were given little weight in the preparation of this book.

More extended accounts in book length have begun to appear. Such works as Margaret Bourke-White, *They Called It "Purple Heart Valley"* (New York, 1944); Ernie Pyle, *Brave Men* (New York, 1944); and Bill Mauldin, *Up Front* (New York, 1945) are excellent sources for the attitudes of the men and the conditions of the fighting. On the other hand the successful novel by Harry Brown, *A Walk in the Sun* (New York, 1944), has no value at all as an account of the action at Salerno, whatever its literary merits may be. Capt. Harry C. Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower* (New York, 1946), has begun the now-it-can-be-told series; though disappointing at times, it sheds light on the high-level strategy. It is to be hoped that Generals Alexander, Clark, Truscott, Lucas, Keyes, and others will publish memoirs or diaries to illuminate the problems and conflicts of command.

## MILITARY STUDIES

In addition to works of general nature, there are a number of more purely military studies. Both the *Infantry Journal* and the *Military Review*, as well as other service periodicals, have published numerous articles on phases of the Italian campaign; some are good, others are by brief observers or by individuals writing more for personal advertisement than with a serious aim of getting at the truth. In addition to the *Fifth Army History* the Historical Section, Fifth Army, prepared a number of so-called pamphlets, giving the American side of the action in detail and published by the Historical Division of the War Department. These include:

- Salerno* (9 September-6 October 1943) (Washington 1944)
- From the Volturno to the Winter Line* (6 October-15 November 1943) (Washington 1945)
- Fifth Army at the Winter Line* (15 November 1943-15 January 1944) (Washington 1945)
- The Anzio Beachhead* (22 January-1 April 1944) (Washington 1948)
- The Drive to Rome* (11 May-4 June 1944)
- The Battle of Santa Maria Infante* (11-14 May 1944) (Washington 1947; in *Small Unit Actions*)
- The Capture of Leghorn and Pisa* (26 June-23 July 1944)
- The Gothic Line* (9 September-31 October 1944)

Other military studies already published, of which I have knowledge, include:

- Marshall, George C., *The Winning of the War in Europe and the Pacific* (Washington, 1946)
- Wilson, Sir Henry M., *Report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the Italian Campaign, 8th January 1944 to 10th May 1944* (London and Washington, 1946; very largely drawn from Part IV of the *Fifth Army History*)
- 15th Army Group, *Finito, the Po Valley Campaign (Italy, 1945)*

- A Military Encyclopedia Based on Operations in the Italian Campaign 1943-45* (Italy, 1945)
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*Operation Diadem* (11 May-4 August 1944) (Italy, 1944)  
*Blockade* (27 August 1944-1 May 1945) (Italy, 1945)  
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- Fifth Army, *Road to Rome* (Italy, 1944)  
*The Advance on Rome* (Italy, 1944)  
*Nineteen Days* (Italy, 1945)  
*Fifth Army Antiaircraft, Salerno to Florence* (Italy, 1945)  
*Chaplains of Fifth Army* (Italy, 1945)  
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- IV Corps, *The Final Campaign across Northwest Italy* (Italy, 1945)
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- Shirey, Orville C., *Americans: The Story of the 442d Combat Team* (Washington, 1947)
- 517th Parachute Combat Team, *History* (France, 1945)
- 57th Bomb Wing, *Battle of the Brenner* (Italy, 1945)
- 77th Field Artillery, *An Informal History* (Italy, 1945)
- 337th Field Artillery Battalion, *We Left Home* (Italy, 1945)
- Altieri, James J., *Darby's Rangers* (Durham, N. C., 1947)

In addition to the above, many units are now publishing their histories in the United States. Presumably the British and the French will eventually prepare accounts of the action of their units; the likelihood of extensive German studies is more dubious. It is fortunate that the G-2 reports for the Italian campaign are full and relatively accurate on the lower levels at least.

The works already published and those to come will undoubtedly clarify the story of the Italian campaign in many spots. A serious student of that campaign, however, must never forget that the ultimate touchstone is furnished by the official records of the units involved, prepared at the time of action. However limited in literary quality these records may be, however voluminous and yet at the same time spotty, they are the most objective source we have, and over all they are the most accurate. The process of legend and accretion is already well advanced; the farther we draw away from the battles, the less clear our memories will become and the more we may desire—consciously or unconsciously—to present a favorable picture for the judgment of posterity.

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## APPENDIX 2

# GERMAN ORDER OF BATTLE

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### **Army Group Southwest (C)**

**Tenth Army**

**Fourteenth Army**

**Army of Liguria**

**I Parachute Corps**

**XIV Panzer Corps<sup>1</sup>**

**LI Mountain Corps<sup>1</sup>**

**LXXIII Infantry Corps**

**LXXV Infantry Corps<sup>2</sup>**

**LXXVI Panzer Corps**

**LXXXVII Infantry Corps<sup>3</sup>**

### **Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division<sup>4,5</sup>**

**HG Reconnaissance Battalion**

**1st HG Panzer Grenadier Regiment**

**2d HG Panzer Grenadier Regiment**

**HG Panzer Regiment**

**HG Artillery Regiment<sup>6</sup>**

### **1st Parachute Division**

**1st Parachute Grenadier Regiment**

**3d Parachute Grenadier Regiment**

**4th Parachute Grenadier Regiment**

**1st Parachute Artillery Regiment**

### **2d Parachute Division<sup>7</sup>**

#### **3d Panzer Grenadier Division<sup>1,8</sup>**

**103d Reconnaissance Battalion**

**8th Panzer Grenadier Regiment**

**29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment**

**103d Panzer Battalion**

**3d Artillery Regiment**

### **4th Parachute Division**

**10th Parachute Grenadier Regiment**

**11th Parachute Grenadier Regiment**

**12th Parachute Grenadier Regiment**

**4th Parachute Artillery Regiment**

### **5th Mountain Division**

**95th Reconnaissance Battalion**

**85th Mountain Infantry Regiment**

**100th Mountain Infantry Regiment**

**95th Artillery Regiment**

**8th Mountain Division<sup>9</sup>**

- 1057th Reconnaissance Battalion
- 296th Mountain Infantry Regiment
- 297th Mountain Infantry Regiment
- 1057th Artillery Regiment

**15th Panzer Grenadier Division<sup>5,10</sup>**

- 115th Reconnaissance Battalion
- 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment
- 115th Panzer Grenadier Regiment
- 129th Panzer Grenadier Regiment
- 115th Panzer Battalion
- 33d Artillery Regiment

**16th Panzer Division<sup>1,11</sup>**

- 16th Reconnaissance Battalion
- 64th Panzer Grenadier Regiment
- 79th Panzer Grenadier Regiment
- 2d Panzer Regiment
- 16th Artillery Regiment

**16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division *Reichsführer SS*<sup>12</sup>**

- 16th Reconnaissance Battalion
- 35th Panzer Grenadier Regiment
- 36th Panzer Grenadier Regiment
- 16th Panzer Battalion
- 16th Artillery Regiment

**19th GAF Field Division<sup>13</sup>**

- 19th Fusilier Company
- 37th Grenadier Regiment
- 38th Grenadier Regiment
- 46th Grenadier Regiment
- 19th Artillery Regiment

**20th GAF Field Division**

- 20th Fusilier Company
- 39th Grenadier Regiment
- 40th Grenadier Regiment
- 20th Artillery Regiment

**24th SS Mountain Division<sup>7</sup>****26th Panzer Division**

- 26th Reconnaissance Battalion
- 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment
- 67th Panzer Grenadier Regiment
- 26th Panzer Regiment
- 93d Artillery Regiment

**29th Panzer Grenadier Division<sup>1</sup>**

- 129th Reconnaissance Battalion
- 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment
- 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment
- 129th Panzer Battalion
- 29th Artillery Regiment

**34th Grenadier Division<sup>2</sup>****42d Light Division**

- 142d Reconnaissance Battalion
- 25th Grenadier Regiment
- 40th Grenadier Regiment
- 142d Artillery Regiment

**44th Grenadier Division *Hoch- und Deutschmeister*<sup>1,14</sup>**

- 44th Reconnaissance Battalion
- 131st Grenadier Regiment
- 132d Grenadier Regiment
- 134th Grenadier Regiment
- 96th Artillery Regiment

**65th Grenadier Division**

- 65th Fusilier Battalion
- 145th Grenadier Regiment
- 146th Grenadier Regiment
- 147th Grenadier Regiment
- 165th Artillery Regiment

**71st Grenadier Division<sup>1,15</sup>**

- 71st Fusilier Battalion
- 191st Grenadier Regiment
- 194th Grenadier Regiment
- 211th Grenadier Regiment
- 171st Artillery Regiment

**90th Panzer Grenadier Division<sup>6</sup>**

- 190th Reconnaissance Battalion
- 155th Panzer Grenadier Regiment
- 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment
- 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment
- 190th Panzer Battalion
- 190th Artillery Regiment

**92d Grenadier Division<sup>16</sup>**

- 92d Fusilier Battalion
- 1059th Grenadier Regiment
- 1060th Grenadier Regiment
- 192d Artillery Regiment

**94th Grenadier Division<sup>1</sup>**

- 94th Fusilier Battalion
- 267th Grenadier Regiment
- 274th Grenadier Regiment
- 276th Grenadier Regiment
- 194th Artillery Regiment

**98th Grenadier Division**

- 98th Fusilier Battalion
- 117th Grenadier Regiment
- 289th Grenadier Regiment
- 290th Grenadier Regiment
- 198th Artillery Regiment

**114th Light Division**

114th Reconnaissance Battalion  
721st Grenadier Regiment  
741st Grenadier Regiment  
661st Artillery Regiment

**148th Grenadier Division**

148th Fusilier Battalion  
281st Grenadier Regiment  
285th Grenadier Regiment  
286th Grenadier Regiment  
1048th Artillery Regiment

**155th Field Training Division<sup>7</sup>****162d Grenadier Division**

236th Fusilier Battalion  
303d Grenadier Regiment  
314th Grenadier Regiment  
329th Grenadier Regiment  
236th Artillery Regiment

**232d Grenadier Division**

232d Fusilier Battalion  
1043d Grenadier Regiment  
1044th Grenadier Regiment  
1045th Grenadier Regiment  
232d Artillery Regiment

**237th Grenadier Division**

237th Fusilier Battalion  
1046th Grenadier Regiment  
1047th Grenadier Regiment  
1048th Grenadier Regiment  
237th Artillery Regiment

**278th Grenadier Division**

278th Fusilier Battalion  
992d Grenadier Regiment  
993d Grenadier Regiment  
994th Grenadier Regiment  
278th Artillery Regiment

**305th Grenadier Division<sup>1</sup>**

305th Fusilier Battalion  
576th Grenadier Regiment  
577th Grenadier Regiment  
578th Grenadier Regiment  
305th Artillery Regiment

**334th Grenadier Division<sup>8</sup>**

334th Fusilier Battalion  
754th Grenadier Regiment  
755th Grenadier Regiment  
756th Grenadier Regiment  
334th Artillery Regiment

**356th Grenadier Division<sup>17</sup>**  
 356th Fusilier Battalion  
 869th Grenadier Regiment  
 870th Grenadier Regiment  
 871st Grenadier Regiment  
 356th Artillery Regiment

**362d Grenadier Division**  
 362d Fusilier Battalion  
 954th Grenadier Regiment  
 955th Grenadier Regiment  
 956th Grenadier Regiment  
 362d Artillery Regiment

**710th Grenadier Division**  
 710th Fusilier Battalion  
 730th Grenadier Regiment  
 740th Grenadier Regiment  
 1710th (?) Artillery Regiment

**715th Grenadier Division<sup>18</sup>**  
 715th Fusilier Battalion  
 725th Grenadier Regiment  
 735th Grenadier Regiment  
 1028th Grenadier Regiment (added)  
 671st Artillery Regiment

#### NOTES TO APPENDIX 2

<sup>1</sup>Virtually destroyed at Stalingrad; reformed.

<sup>2</sup>On Franco-Italian frontier.

<sup>3</sup>In North Italy; disbanded in autumn of 1944 (?).

<sup>4</sup>Left Italy in July 1944 for Russian front.

<sup>5</sup>Virtually destroyed in Tunisia; reformed.

<sup>6</sup>The normal German division had also an antitank battalion, signal battalion, engineer battalion, and services, which were usually given the number of the artillery regiment or else of the division.

<sup>7</sup>Never engaged on Italian front.

<sup>8</sup>Left Italy for France in August 1944.

<sup>9</sup>Renumbered in the spring of 1945; previously the 157th Mountain Division.

<sup>10</sup>Left Italy for France in August 1944.

<sup>11</sup>Left Italy in the winter of 1943 for Russian front.

<sup>12</sup>Elements in Hungary until July 1944; left Italy in February 1945.

<sup>13</sup>Disbanded in August 1944.

<sup>14</sup>Left Italy in November 1944 for Hungarian front.

<sup>15</sup>Left Italy in December 1944 for Hungarian front.

<sup>16</sup>Disbanded in July 1944.

<sup>17</sup>Left Italy in January 1945.

<sup>18</sup>Left Italy in March 1945.

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## APPENDIX 3

# TROOP LIST OF FIFTH ARMY

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### AMERICAN TROOPS

#### **Headquarters Fifth Army<sup>1</sup>**

Headquarters Company, Fifth Army

Headquarters Detachment, Special Troops

II Corps, Headquarters and Headquarters Company

IV Corps, Headquarters and Headquarters Company

VI Corps, Headquarters and Headquarters Company

#### **1st Armored Division**

Headquarters and Headquarters Company

Combat Command A, Headquarters and Headquarters Company

Combat Command B, Headquarters and Headquarters Company

Reserve Command

1st Armored Division Trains, Headquarters and Headquarters Company

123d Ordnance Maintenance Battalion

47th Armored Medical Battalion

Military Police Platoon

1st Armored Division Band

81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized<sup>2</sup>

16th Armored Engineer Battalion

141st Armored Signal Company

1st Armored Division Artillery, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery

27th, 68th, and 91st Armored Field Artillery Battalions [105mm  
Howitzer, Self-Propelled]

6th Armored Infantry Battalion

11th Armored Infantry Battalion

14th Armored Infantry Battalion

1st Tank Battalion

4th Tank Battalion

13th Tank Battalion

#### **3d Infantry Division**

Headquarters

Headquarters, Special Troops

Headquarters Company

703d Ordnance Light Maintenance Company

3d Quartermaster Company

3d Signal Company

Military Police Platoon

3d Infantry Division Band

3d Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, Mechanized

10th Engineer Battalion

- 3d Medical Battalion
- 3d Division Artillery, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery
  - 9th Field Artillery Battalion [155mm Howitzer]
  - 10th, 39th, and 41st Field Artillery Battalions [105mm Howitzer]
- 7th Infantry Regiment
- 15th Infantry Regiment
- 30th Infantry Regiment
- 10th Mountain Division
  - Headquarters
  - Headquarters, Special Troops
    - Headquarters Company
    - 710th Mountain Ordnance Maintenance Company
    - 110th Mountain Signal Company
    - Military Police Platoon
  - 10th Mountain Quartermaster Battalion
  - 10th Mountain Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop
  - 10th Mountain Infantry Antitank Battalion
  - 126th Mountain Engineer Battalion
  - 10th Mountain Medical Battalion
  - 10th Mountain Division Artillery, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery
    - 604th, 605th, and 616th Field Artillery Battalions [75mm Pack Howitzer]
  - 85th Mountain Infantry Regiment
  - 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment
  - 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment
- 34th Infantry Division
  - Headquarters
  - Headquarters, Special Troops
    - Headquarters Company
    - 734th Ordnance Light Maintenance Company
    - 34th Quartermaster Company
    - 34th Signal Company
    - Military Police Platoon
  - 34th Infantry Division Band
  - 34th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, Mechanized
  - 109th Engineer Battalion
  - 109th Medical Battalion
  - 34th Division Artillery, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery
    - 185th Field Artillery Battalion [155mm Howitzers]
    - 125th, 151st, and 175th Field Artillery Battalions [105mm Howitzer]
  - 133d Infantry Regiment
  - 135th Infantry Regiment
  - 168th Infantry Regiment
- 36th Infantry Division
  - Headquarters
  - Headquarters, Special Troops
    - Headquarters Company
    - 736th Ordnance Light Maintenance Company
    - 36th Quartermaster Company
    - 36th Signal Company

Military Police Platoon  
36th Infantry Division Band  
36th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, Mechanized  
111th Engineer Battalion  
111th Medical Battalion  
36th Division Artillery, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery  
    155th Field Artillery Battalion [155mm Howitzer]  
    131st, 132d, and 133d Field Artillery Battalions [105mm Howitzer]  
141st Infantry Regiment  
142d Infantry Regiment  
143d Infantry Regiment  
45th Infantry Division  
    Headquarters  
    Headquarters, Special Troops  
        Headquarters Company  
        700th Ordnance Light Maintenance Company  
        45th Quartermaster Company  
        45th Signal Company  
        Military Police Platoon  
    45th Infantry Division Band  
    45th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, Mechanized  
    120th Engineer Battalion  
    120th Medical Battalion  
    45th Division Artillery, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery  
        189th Field Artillery Battalion [155mm Howitzer]  
        158th, 160th, and 171st Field Artillery Battalions [105mm Howitzer]  
    157th Infantry Regiment  
    179th Infantry Regiment  
    180th Infantry Regiment  
82d Airborne Infantry Division  
    Headquarters and Headquarters Company  
    782d Airborne Ordnance Maintenance Company  
    407th Airborne Quartermaster Company  
    82d Airborne Signal Company  
    Military Police Platoon  
    80th Airborne Antiaircraft Battalion  
    307th Airborne Engineer Battalion  
    307th Airborne Medical Battalion  
    82d Airborne Division Artillery, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery  
        319th, 320th, and 376th Glider Field Artillery Battalions [75mm Pack Howitzer]  
        325th Glider Infantry Regiment  
        504th Parachute Infantry Regiment  
        505th Parachute Infantry Regiment  
85th Infantry Division  
    Headquarters  
    Headquarters, Special Troops  
        Headquarters Company  
        785th Ordnance Light Maintenance Company

## TROOP LIST OF FIFTH ARMY

- 85th Quartermaster Company
- 85th Signal Company
- Military Police Platoon
- 85th Infantry Division Band
- 85th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, Mechanized
- 310th Engineer Battalion
- 310th Medical Battalion
- 85th Division Artillery, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery
  - 403d Field Artillery Battalion [155mm Howitzer]
  - 328th, 329th, and 910th Field Artillery Battalions [105mm Howitzer]
- 337th Infantry Regiment
- 338th Infantry Regiment
- 339th Infantry Regiment
- 88th Infantry Division
  - Headquarters**
  - Headquarters, Special Troops**
    - Headquarters Company
    - 788th Ordnance Light Maintenance Company
    - 88th Quartermaster Company
    - 88th Signal Company
    - Military Police Platoon
  - 88th Infantry Division Band
  - 88th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, Mechanized
  - 313th Engineer Battalion
  - 313th Medical Battalion
  - 88th Division Artillery, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery
    - 913th Field Artillery Battalion [155mm Howitzer]
    - 337th, 338th, and 339th Field Artillery Battalions [105mm Howitzer]
  - 349th Infantry Regiment
  - 350th Infantry Regiment
  - 351st Infantry Regiment
- 91st Infantry Division
  - Headquarters**
  - Headquarters, Special Troops**
    - Headquarters Company
    - 791st Ordnance Light Maintenance Company
    - 91st Quartermaster Company
    - 91st Signal Company
    - Military Police Platoon
  - 91st Infantry Division Band
  - 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, Mechanized
  - 316th Engineer Battalion
  - 316th Medical Battalion
  - 91st Division Artillery, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery
    - 348th Field Artillery Battalion [155mm Howitzer]
    - 346th, 347th, and 916th Field Artillery Battalions [105mm Howitzer]
  - 361st Infantry Regiment
  - 362d Infantry Regiment
  - 363d Infantry Regiment

**92d Infantry Division****Headquarters****Headquarters, Special Troops**    **Headquarters Company**    **792d Ordnance Light Maintenance Company**    **92d Quartermaster Company**    **92d Signal Company**    **Military Police Platoon**    **92d Signal Company****92d Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, Mechanized****317th Engineer Battalion****317th Medical Battalion****92d Division Artillery, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery**    **600th Field Artillery Battalion [155mm Howitzer]**    **597th, 598th, and 599th Field Artillery Battalions [105mm Howitzer]****365th Infantry Regiment****370th Infantry Regiment****371st Infantry Regiment****Adjutant General:**

Army Postal Units: 533d, 537th, 539th, 541st, 542d, 543d, 547th, 549th.

Machine Records Units: 9th, 10th, 25th.

Postal Regulating Station: 34th.

**Air Force:****3d Depot Unit, Army**

121st Liaison Squadron [less Flights A and D]

Detachment, Mediterranean Allied Photo Reconnaissance Wing

**Antiaircraft Artillery:****AAA Brigades:** 34th, 35th, 45th, 71st, 2626th.**AAA Groups:** 4th, 5th, 8th, 9th, 91st, 107th, 209th, 505th.**Coast Artillery Regiments (AA):** 67th, 68th, 209th, 213th, 505th.**AAA Automatic Weapons Battalions:** 410th, 435th, 436th, 439th, 451st, 532d, 534th, 536th, 630th, 894th, 898th.**AAA Automatic Weapons Battalions (Self-Propelled):** 105th, 106th, 432d, 433d, 434th, 437th, 441st, 443d.**AAA Automatic Weapons Battalions (Semi-Mobile):** 201st, 450th, 900th.**AAA Gun Battalions:** 67th, 72d, 108th, 216th, 401st, 403d.**AAA Gun Battalion (Semi-Mobile):** 409th.**AAA Searchlight Battalions:** 351st, 360th [Batteries B and C only].**AAA Machine Gun Batteries (Airborne):** 688th—693d.**Barrage Balloon Batteries (Very Low Altitude):** 102d, 104th [detachment only].**Gun Operations Room Platoons:** 6672d, 6673d, 6707th.**Armored Force:****Armored Groups:** 1st, 2d.**Tank Battalions (Medium):** 191st, 751st, 753d, 755th.

Tank Battalions (Light): 756th, 757th, 758th.

Tank Battalions: 752d, 760th.

**Cavalry:**

Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadrons: 91st, 117th.

**Chemical:**

Chemical Mortar Battalions: 2d, 3d, 83d, 84th, 99th, 100th.

Chemical Decontamination Company: 24th.

Chemical Depot Company: 6th.

Chemical Maintenance Companies: 2d, 11th.

Chemical Smoke Generating Companies: 168th, 172d, 179th.

**Engineers:**

Engineer Headquarters, Fifth Army.

Engineer Group: 2626th.

Engineer Special Brigade: 1st.

Engineer Combat Groups: 19th, 39th, 1108th, 1168th, 1338th.

Engineer Combat Regiments: 19th, 36th, 39th, 540th.

Engineer General Service Regiments: 92d, 175th, 224th, 226th, 337th, 343d, 344th, 345th [detachment only]

Engineer Shore Regiments: 531st, 540th.

Engineer Battalion (Separate): 387th.

Engineer Battalions (Heavy Ponton): 85th [Company A only], 1554th.

Engineer Camouflage Battalion: 84th [Companies A and D only].

Engineer Combat Battalions: 48th, 169th, 182d, 185th, 235th, 255th, 337th, 401st, 402d, 407th, 643d.

Engineer Topographic Battalion: 649th [Survey Platoon only].

Engineer Water Supply Battalion: 405th.

Engineer Camouflage Company: 2916th.

Engineer Depot Companies: 276th, 383d, 451st [1st Platoon only], 462d [detachment], 473d [2d Platoon only], 2769th.

Engineer Dump Truck Companies: 217th, 423d, 425th, 427th.

Engineer Light Equipment Companies: 597th, 2750th.

Engineer Maintenance Companies: 400th, 469th, 473d [2d Platoon only].

Engineer Mine Clearing Company: 6617th.

Engineer Topographic Companies: 66th, 661st.

Engineer Treadway Bridge Companies: 1029th, 1755th.

Petroleum Distributing Company: 696th [detachment].

Engineer Aviation Fire Fighting Platoons: 1980th, 1981st.

Engineer Fire Fighting Platoons: 1202d, 1206th.

Engineer Map Depot Detachments: 1710th, 1712th, 2699th.

Engineer Model Making Detachment: 1621st [section only].

Engineer Searchlight Maintenance Detachments: 1438th, 1439th.

Engineer Utilities Detachment: 1628th.

Engineer Utilities Platoon: 2616th.

**Field Artillery:**

Corps Artillery Headquarters: II, IV, VI.

Field Artillery Brigades: 13th, 18th, 71st.

Field Artillery Groups: 6th, 17th, 35th, 36th, 77th, 178th, 194th, 423d, 424th, 428th.

Armored Field Artillery Group: 6th.

Field Artillery Regiments [155mm Gun]: 36th.

Field Artillery Regiments [155mm Howitzer]: 17th, 77th, 178th.

Field Artillery Observation Battalions: 1st, 2d, 15th, 617th.

Field Artillery Battalions [240mm Howitzer]: 697th, 698th.

Field Artillery Battalions [8-inch Howitzer]: 194th, 527th, 536th, 630th, 932d, 995th.

Field Artillery Battalions [155mm Gun]: 36th, 173d, 530th, 633d, 976th, 977th, 985th.

Field Artillery Battalions [155mm Howitzer]: 17th, 75th, 141st, 178th, 248th, 631st, 634th, 765th, 766th, 932d, 933d, 936th, 937th, 938th.

Field Artillery Battalions [4.5-inch Gun]: 935th, 939th.

Armored Field Artillery Battalions [105mm Howitzer]: 59th, 69th, 93d, 1125th.

Field Artillery Battalions (Pack) [75mm Howitzer]: 601st, 602d.

Parachute Field Artillery Battalions [75mm Pack Howitzer]: 456th [less Batteries C and D], 463d [less Batteries C and D].

**Infantry:**

1st Special Service Force

1st, 2d, and 3d Regiments

Service Battalion

6615th Ranger Force

1st, 3d, and 4th Ranger Battalions

366th Infantry Regiment

442d Regimental Combat Team

442d Infantry Regiment

522d Field Artillery Battalion [105mm Howitzer]

232d Engineer Combat Company

206th Army Ground Forces Band

473d Infantry Regiment

517th Parachute Combat Team

517th Parachute Infantry Regiment

460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion [75mm Pack Howitzer]

596th Airborne Engineer Company

100th Infantry Battalion (Separate)

509th Parachute Infantry Battalion

33d, 34th, 35th, 37th, and 38th Infantry Scout Dog Platoon

**Medical:**

Convalescent Hospital: 3d.

Evacuation Hospitals (750 Bed): 8th, 11th, 16th, 38th, 56th.

Evacuation Hospitals (Semi-Mobile) (400 Bed): 15th, 93d, 94th, 95th, 170th, 171st.

## TROOP LIST OF FIFTH ARMY

Field Hospitals: 10th, 11th, 15th, 32d, 33d.

Veterinary Evacuation Hospital: 17th.

Auxiliary Surgical Group: 2d.

Ambulance Battalion: 36th [Company B and 1 platoon of Company C only].

Medical Battalions: 52d, 54th, 56th, 161st, 162d, 163d, 261st.

Medical Clearing Companies: 601st, 602d, 615th, 683d, 891st.

Medical Collecting Companies: 379th—381st, 401st—406th, 671st—673d, 885th—887th.

Medical Depot Companies: 4th [detachment], 12th.

Motor Ambulance Companies: 549th, 550th, 551st, 582d, 688th.

Veterinary Company (Separate): 36th.

Malaria Control Units: 28th, 42d, 135th, 2684th.

Malaria Survey Units: 11th, 206th.

Medical Hospital Ship Platoons: 516th, 534th, 535th, 537th.

Medical Laboratory: 2d.

Medical Prophylactic Platoons: 307th, 308th.

Medical Service Detachment (Veterinary Food Inspection): 77th.

Veterinary Food Inspection Detachment: 67th.

#### **Military Police:**

Military Police Battalions: 101st, 504th, 759th.

Military Police Companies: 138th, 202d, 206th, 212th [1st Platoon only].

Military Police Companies (Post, Camp and Station): 53d, 61st.

Military Police Escort Guard Companies: 179th, 342d, 377th, 379th.

Military Police Guard Company: 6724th.

Military Police Detachments: 356th, 357th.

Military Police Platoons: 816th, II Corps, IV Corps.

Military Police Prisoner of War Detachments: 74th, 119th, 134th, 141st.

Military Police Prisoner of War Processing Platoon: 153d.

#### **Miscellaneous:**

Technical Supervision Regiment: 2695th.

Port: 6th.

Casual Battalion: 6648th.

Replacement Battalions: 29th, 108th.

Headquarters Companies: 2672d (Allied Liaison Service), 2675th (Allied Military Government), 2679th (Psychological Warfare Branch; detachment only), 2680th (Interrogation of Prisoners of War; detachment only), 6736th (Overhead), 6750th (City Administration).

Replacement Companies: 509th, 510th, 511th.

Service Company: 2633d [rest centers].

Special Service Companies: 20th, 21st, 37th [3d Platoon only], 45th.

Aerial Supply Detachment: 2619th.

Army Ground Force Bands: 231st, 232d, 245th, 246th.

Army Service Forces Band: 420th.

Counter Intelligence Corps Detachments: 10th, 34th, 85th, 88th, 91st, 92d, 202d, 204th, 305th, 501st, 6679th, 6756th, 6773d, 6781st, 6788th—6794th.

Finance Disbursing Sections: 13th, 16th, 30th, 33d, 48th, 49th, 50th.

Information and Historical Service: 7th.

WAC Headquarters Platoon: 6669th.

Detachment, AFHQ, Central Public Relations Office and Liaison Group

Detachment, AFHQ, Document Section

Detachment, AFHQ, G-2 Section

Detachment, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 703d Railway Grand Division

Detachment, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 6665th Base Area Group

Detachment, Office of Strategic Services

Company G, 2675th Regiment, Allied Control Commission (USC)

Company M, 2674th Regiment, Joint Rearmament Commission

Fifth Army Army Photo Center

Mobile Stars and Stripes Unit

Ordnance:

Ordnance Groups: 53d, 56th, 2660th.

Ordnance Base Group: 6694th.

Ordnance Base Regiment: 302d [Companies A and R only].

Ordnance Battalions: 5th, 42d, 44th, 45th, 62d, 67th, 73d, 87th, 188th, 197th, 2630th.

Ordnance Company (Motor Transport Service): 330th.

Ordnance Ammunition Companies: 53d, 58th, 66th, 236th, 605th, 632d, 684th, 2652d.

Ordnance Bomb Disposal Company: 236th.

Ordnance Depot Companies: 77th, 79th, 99th, 189th, 201st, 330th.

Ordnance Evacuation Companies: 229th, 476th, 477th.

Ordnance Heavy Automotive Maintenance Companies: 86th, 529th, 881st, 972d.

Ordnance Heavy Maintenance Companies (FA): 31st, 82d.

Ordnance Heavy Maintenance Companies (Q): 878th, 907th.

Ordnance Heavy Maintenance Companies (Tank): 86th, 87th, 525th, 529th, 991st.

Ordnance Maintenance Companies (AA): 93d, 261st, 262d.

Ordnance Medium Automotive Maintenance Companies: 63d, 70th, 100th, 3459th, 3486th, 3488th.

Ordnance Medium Maintenance Companies: 5th, 8th, 14th, 28th, 29th, 45th, 46th, 94th, 101st, 109th, 112th, 411th.

Ordnance Medium Maintenance Companies (Q): 881st, 3407th, 3485th—3488th, 3497th.

Ordnance Tank Transporter Company: 2622d.

Ordnance Tire Repair Company: 160th.

Ordnance Platoon: 161st.

Ordnance Tank Recovery and Evacuation Platoon: 1st.

Ordnance Bomb Disposal Squads: 55th, 56th, 136th, 137th, 144th—154th, 164th.

**Quartermaster:**

Quartermaster Battalions: 62d, 94th, 242d, 249th, 259th, 263d, 530th, 536th.

Quartermaster Battalion (Mobile): 204th.

Quartermaster Bakery Battalion: 95th [1st and 2d Platoons, Company B only].

Quartermaster Gas Supply Battalion: 205th [Company A only].

Quartermaster Laundry Battalion: 61st [1st Platoon, Company D, only].

Quartermaster Sterilizing Battalions: 301st [Companies A and B only], 302d [1st Platoon, Company B, only].

Quartermaster Bakery Companies: 102d, 110th.

Quartermaster Bakery Companies (Mobile) (Special): 3005th, 3006th.

Quartermaster Car Companies: 22d, 523d.

Quartermaster Depot Companies: 85th, 334th [1 platoon only].

Quartermaster Fumigation and Bath Company: 822d.

Quartermaster Gas Supply Companies: 3837th—3840th, 3853d, 3880th.

Quartermaster Graves Registration Companies: 47th, 48th, 602d [2 platoons only].

Quartermaster Laundry Companies: 408th, 487th, 498th [4th Platoon only], 585th, 632d.

Quartermaster Railhead Companies: 86th, 90th, 93d, 94th, 98th, 4522d.

Quartermaster Refrigeration Companies: 67th [1st Platoon only], 280th.

Quartermaster Salvage Collecting Company: 230th.

Quartermaster Salvage Repair Company: 299th.

Quartermaster Service Companies: 3254th—3257th, 3278th, 3280th, 3281st, 3298th—3300th, 4053d, 4062d—4065th.

Quartermaster Sterilizing Companies: 815th—818th.

Quartermaster Truck Companies (Tank): 3341st, 3654th [2d Platoon only].

**Signal:**

Headquarters, Fifth Army Signal Service

Signal Service Groups: 3141st [detachments], 3142d.

Armored Signal Battalion: 1st [Company C and detachment only].

Signal Battalions: 51st, 53d, 57th, 62d, 63d.

Signal Construction Battalion: 30th [less Company A].

Signal Light Construction Battalions: 102d, 103d.

Signal Operating Battalions: 51st, 63d, 229th.

Picture Service Company: 6655th.

Signal Company: 286th.

Signal Companies (Special): 71st, 72d [detachments], 74th.

Signal Depot Company: 212th.

Signal Intelligence and Monitoring Company: 3326th.

Signal Monitoring Company: 6689th.

Signal Operating Company: 229th.

Signal Photo Companies: 163d, 196th.

Signal Pigeon Companies: 209th [less Breeding Section], 6681st.

Signal Port Service Companies: 812th [1 section], 817th [detachment].

Signal Radio Intelligence Companies: 117th, 128th.

Signal Radio Relay Station Company: 2650th [teams 2 and 6].

Signal Repair Company: 180th.

Signal Service Companies: 3131st [detachment], 3133d, 3915th (Radio Intelligence), 3916th (Radio Intelligence), 6662d [detachment], 6663d [detachment], 6746th.

Film and Equipment Exchange: 2603d [detachment].

Radio Direction Finding Detachments: 4119-S, 4119-T.

Signal Detachments: 2688th, 6759th.

Signal Center Detachment: 32d.

Signal Inspection and Maintenance Detachments: 88th, 89th, 3203d, 3326th, 3918th, 6737th, 6738th.

Signal Intelligence Service: 849th, 3200th, 3201st.

Signal Photo Production Detachment: 3225th.

Signal Radar Maintenance Units: 52d, 54th, 55th, 57th, 225th, 234th.

Signal Service Sections: 3202d, 3203d.

Signal SW Platoon: 177th.

#### Tank Destroyer:

Tank Destroyer Group: 1st.

Tank Destroyer Battalions: 601st, 636th, 645th, 679th, 701st, 776th, 804th, 805th, 813th [detachment], 894th, 899th.

#### Transportation:

Quartermaster Group: 26th.

Traffic Regulation Group: 21st.

Truck Group: 6723d.

Quartermaster Truck Regiments: 27th [2d Battalion only], 468th [1st Battalion only].

Port Battalions: 384th [Company A only], 389th, 480th, 488th.

Quartermaster Battalions (Mobile): 52d, 55th, 56th, 70th, 115th, 125th, 235th, 361st, 468th, 2618th.

Quartermaster Truck Battalions (DUKW): 52d, 53d.

Docks Operating Company: 1007th.

Quartermaster Truck Companies: 3332d—3340th, 3353d—3360th, 3373d—3376th, 3404th, 3405th, 3407th, 3421st—3424th, 3487th, 3488th, 3505th—3508th, 3541st, 3542d, 3550th, 3551st, 3562d, 3567th, 3591st, 3592d, 3605th, 3606th, 3637th—3644th, 6748th, 6749th.

Regulating Company: 6730th.

Group Regulating Station: 2d.

Motor Platoons: 2636th, 2637th.

## BRAZILIAN TROOPS

### 1st Infantry Division

Headquarters and Headquarters Company

Ordnance Light Maintenance Company

1st Quartermaster Company

1st Signal Company

Military Police Platoon

1st Infantry Division Band  
 1st Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, Mechanized  
 9th Engineer Combat Battalion  
 1st Medical Battalion  
 1st Artillery Regiment  
   1st, 2d, and 3d Field Artillery Battalions [105mm Howitzer]  
   4th Field Artillery Battalion [155mm Howitzer]  
 1st Infantry Regiment  
 6th Infantry Regiment  
 11th Infantry Regiment  
 1st, 2d, and 3d Medical Groups  
 Graves Registration Platoon  
 2d Finance Complement  
 Quartermaster Depot Platoon

#### BRITISH TROOPS

##### **British Increment, Headquarters Fifth Army**

2 New Zealand Corps  
 10 Corps<sup>3</sup>  
 13 Corps<sup>3</sup>  
 1 British Infantry Division<sup>4</sup>  
   Headquarters  
   2/7 Battalion, Middlesex Regiment [machine-gun battalion]  
   1 Division Royal Artillery (RA)  
     2, 19, and 67 Field Regiments RA [24 25-pounders]  
     81 Anti-Tank Regiment RA [36 57mm Guns; 12 17-pounders]<sup>5</sup>  
     90 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment RA [54 40mm Guns]  
   1 Battalion, Reconnaissance Regiment  
   2 Infantry Brigade  
     6 Battalion, Gordon Highlanders [6 Gordons]  
     1 Battalion, Loyal Regiment [1 Loyals]  
     2 Battalion, North Staffordshire Regiment [2 North Staffs]  
   3 Infantry Brigade  
     1 Battalion, Duke of Wellington's Regiment [1 DWR]  
     2 Battalion, Sherwood Foresters [2 Foresters]  
     1 Battalion, King's Shropshire Light Infantry [1 KSLI]  
   24 Guards Brigade [Anzio]  
     1 Battalion, Irish Guards [1 Irish Guards]  
     1 Battalion, Scots Guards [1 Scots Guards]  
     5 Battalion, Grenadier Guards [5 Grenadier Guards]  
   18 Brigade [Anzio]  
   66 Infantry Brigade [Gothic Line]  
     2 Battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers [2 Royal Scots Fusiliers]  
     1 Battalion, Hertfordshire Regiment [1 Herts]

**2 New Zealand Division****Headquarters**

27 New Zealand (Machine Gun) Battalion

**2 New Zealand Division Artillery**

4, 5, and 6 New Zealand Field Regiments [24 25-pounders]

7 New Zealand Anti-Tank Regiment [36 57mm Guns; 12 17-pounders]

14 New Zealand Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment [54 40mm Guns]

**2 New Zealand Division Cavalry Regiment****4 New Zealand Armoured Brigade**

18 New Zealand Armoured Regiment

19 New Zealand Armoured Regiment

20 New Zealand Armoured Regiment

22 New Zealand Battalion (Motorised)

**5 New Zealand Infantry Brigade**

21 New Zealand Battalion

23 New Zealand Battalion

28 New Zealand Battalion (Maori)

**6 New Zealand Infantry Brigade**

24 New Zealand Battalion

25 New Zealand Battalion

26 New Zealand Battalion

**4 Indian Infantry Division****Headquarters****Machine Gun Battalion, Rajputana Rifles****4 Indian Division Royal Artillery**

1, 11, and 31 Field Regiments RA [24 25-pounders]

149 Anti-Tank Regiment RA [36 57mm Guns; 12 17-pounders]

57 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment RA [54 40mm Guns]

**4 Battalion, Reconnaissance Regiment****5 Indian Infantry Brigade**

1/4 Battalion, Essex Regiment [1/4 Essex]

1/6 Battalion, Rajputana Rifles [1/6 Rajputana Rifles]

1/9 Battalion, Gurkha Rifles [1/9 Gurkha Rifles]

**7 Indian Infantry Brigade**

1 Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment [1 Royal Sussex]

4/16 Battalion, Punjab Regiment [4/16 Punjabs]

1/2 Battalion, Gurkha Rifles [1/2 Gurkha Rifles]

**11 Indian Infantry Brigade**

2 Battalion, Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders [2 Camerons]

4/6 Battalion, Rajputana Rifles [4/6 Rajputana Rifles]

2/7 Battalion, Gurkha Rifles [2/7 Gurkha Rifles]

**5 British Infantry Division****Headquarters**

7 Battalion (22) Cheshire Regiment [machine-gun battalion]

**5 Division Royal Artillery**

91, 92, and 156 Field Regiments RA [24 25-pounders]

52 Anti-Tank Regiment RA [36 57mm Guns; 12 17-pounders]

18 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment RA [54 40mm Guns]

**5 Battalion, Reconnaissance Regiment**

**13 Infantry Brigade**

- 2 Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment [2 Wiltshires]
- 2 Battalion, Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) [2 Cameronians]
- 2 Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers [2 Innisks]

**15 Infantry Brigade**

- 1 Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry [1 KOYLI]
- 1 Battalion, Green Howards [1 Green Howards]
- 1 Battalion, York and Lancaster Regiment [1 Y and L]

**17 Infantry Brigade**

- 6 Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders [6 Seaforths]
- 2 Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment [2 Northamptons]
- 2 Battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers [2 Royal Scots Fusiliers]

**6 British Armoured Division****Headquarters****1 Derby Yeomanry [reconnaissance battalion]****6 Armoured Division Royal Artillery**

- 12 Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery [24 25-pounders Self-Propelled]
- 104 Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery [24 25-pounders]
- 152 Field Regiment RA [24 25-pounders]
- 72 Anti-Tank Regiment RA [36 57mm Guns; 12 17-pounders]

**26 Armoured Brigade**

- 16/5 Battalion, Lancers [16/5 Lancers]
- 17/21 Battalion, Lancers [17/21 Lancers]
- 2 Battalion, Lothians and Border Yeomanry [2 Lothians]

**1 Guards Brigade**

- 3 Battalion, Grenadier Guards [3 Grenadier Guards]
- 2 Battalion, Coldstream Guards [2 Coldstream Guards]
- 3 Battalion, Welsh Guards [3 Welsh Guards]

**61 Infantry Brigade (Motorised)**

- 2 Battalion, Rifle Brigade
- 7 Battalion, Rifle Brigade
- 10 Battalion, Rifle Brigade

**6 South African Armoured Division****Headquarters**

- 1/6 and 15 South African Field Regiments [24 25-pounders]
- 4/22 South African Field Regiment [105mm Howitzer Self-Propelled]
- 7/23 Medium Regiment [5.5-inch Gun/Howitzer]
- 1/11 South African Anti-Tank Regiment [36 57mm Guns; 12 17-pounders]
- 1/12 South African Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment [54 40mm Guns]

**11 South African Armoured Brigade**

- Prince Alfred's Guard
- Pretoria Regiment (Princess Alice's Own) [PR(PAO)]
- Special Service Battalion

**12 South African Motorised Brigade**

- Royal Natal Carbineers [RNC]
- First City/Capetown Highlanders [FC/CH]
- Witwatersrand Rifles/De la Rey Regiment [WR/DLR]

**13 South African Motorised Brigade**

- Natal Mounted Rifles [NMR]

Royal Durban Light Infantry [RDLI]

Imperial Light Horse/Kimberley Regiment [ILH/KimR]

24 Guards Brigade [Gothic Line]

**7 British Armoured Division**

Headquarters

11 Hussars (Prince Albert's Own) [armored-car squadron]

**7 Armoured Division Royal Artillery**

3 and 5 Regiments, Royal Horse Artillery [24 25-pounders]

65 Anti-Tank Regiment RA [36 57mm Guns; 12 17-pounders]

15 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment RA [54 40mm Guns]

**22 Armoured Brigade**

1 Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment [1 Royal Tanks]

5 Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment [5 Royal Tanks]

4 City of London Yeomanry [tank battalion]

1 Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment [motorized infantry] [1 Royal Berks]

**131 Infantry Brigade**

1/5 Battalion, Queen's Own Royal Regiment [1/5 Queens]

1/6 Battalion, Queen's Own Royal Regiment [1/6 Queens]

1/7 Battalion, Queen's Own Royal Regiment [1/7 Queens]

**8 Indian Infantry Division**

Headquarters

6 Battalion, Lancers

5 Battalion, Royal Mahrattas

**8 Indian Division Royal Artillery**

3, 52, and 53 Field Regiments RA [24 25-pounders]

4 Mahrattas Anti-Tank Regiment RA [36 57mm Guns; 12 17-pounders]

**17 Indian Infantry Brigade**

1 Battalion, Royal Fusiliers [1 Royal Fusiliers]

1 Battalion, Frontier Force Rifles [1 FFR]

1/5 Battalion, Gurkha Rifles [1/5 Gurkha Rifles]

**19 Indian Infantry Brigade**

1 Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders [1 A and SH]

3/8 Battalion, Punjab Regiment [3/8 Punjabs]

6 Battalion, Frontier Force Rifles [6 FFR]

**21 Indian Infantry Brigade**

5 Battalion, Royal West Kents [5 Royal West Kents]

3/5 Battalion, Punjab Regiment [3/5 Punjabs]

1 Battalion, Mahrattas [1 Mahrattas]

**46 British Infantry Division**

Headquarters

2 Battalion, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers [weapons battalion]

**46 Division Royal Artillery**

70, 71, and 172 Field Regiments RA [24 25-pounders]

58 Anti-Tank Regiment RA [36 57mm Guns; 12 17-pounders]

115 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment RA [54 40mm Guns]

**46 Battalion, Reconnaissance Regiment**

**128 Infantry Brigade**

1/4 Battalion, Hampshire Regiment [1/4 Hampshires]

- 2 Battalion, Hampshire Regiment [2 Hampshires]
- 5 Battalion, Hampshire Regiment [5 Hampshires]
- 138 Infantry Brigade
  - 6 Battalion, Lincolnshire Regiment [6 Lincolns]
  - 2/4 Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry [2/4 KOYLI]
  - 6 Battalion, York and Lancaster Regiment [6 Y and L]
- 139 Infantry Brigade
  - 2/5 Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment [2/5 Leicesters]
  - 2/5 Battalion, Sherwood Foresters [2/5 Foresters]
  - 16 Battalion, Durham Light Infantry [16 DLI]
- 56 British (London) Infantry Division
  - Headquarters
  - 6 Battalion (22) Cheshire Regiment [machine-gun battalion]
  - 56 Division Royal Artillery
    - 64, 65, and 113 Field Regiments RA [24 25-pounders]
    - 67 Anti-Tank Regiment RA [36 57mm Guns; 12 17-pounders]
    - 100 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment RA [54 40mm Guns]
  - 44 Battalion, Reconnaissance Regiment
  - 167 Infantry Brigade
    - 8 Battalion, Royal Fusiliers [8 Royal Fusiliers]
    - 9 Battalion, Royal Fusiliers [9 Royal Fusiliers]
    - 7 Battalion, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry [7 Oxford Bucks]
  - 168 Infantry Brigade
    - 10 Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment [10 Royal Berks]
    - 1 Battalion, London Scots [1 London Scots]
    - 1 Battalion, London Irish Rifles [1 London Irish Rifles]
  - 169 Infantry Brigade
    - 2/5 Battalion, Queen's Own Royal Regiment [2/5 Queens]
    - 2/6 Battalion, Queen's Own Royal Regiment [2/6 Queens]
    - 2/7 Battalion, Queen's Own Royal Regiment [2/7 Queens]
  - 201 Guards Brigade
    - 6 Battalion, Grenadier Guards [6 Grenadier Guards]
    - 3 Battalion, Coldstream Guards [3 Coldstream Guards]
    - 2 Battalion, Scots Guards [2 Scots Guards]
- 78 British Infantry Division
  - Headquarters
  - 1 Battalion, Kensington Regiment [machine-gun battalion]
  - 78 Division Royal Artillery
    - 17, 132, and 138 Field Regiments RA [24 25-pounders]
    - 64 Anti-Tank Regiment RA [36 57mm Guns; 12 17-pounders]
  - 56 Battalion, Reconnaissance Regiment
  - 11 Infantry Brigade
    - 2 Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers [2 Lancashire Fusiliers]
    - 1 Battalion, East Surrey Regiment [1 Surreys]
    - 5 Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment [5 Northamptons]
  - 36 Infantry Brigade
    - 5 Battalion, Buffs [5 Buffs]
    - 6 Battalion, Royal West Kents [6 Royal West Kents]
    - 8 Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders [8 A and SH]

**38 Infantry Brigade**

- 2 Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers [2 Innisks]
- 1 Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers [1 Royal Irish Fusiliers]
- 2 Battalion, London Irish Rifles [2 London Irish Rifles]

**Anti-Aircraft Artillery:**

- Anti-Aircraft Brigades: 2, 12, 22, 62.
- Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiments [24 3.7-inch Guns]: 1, 9, 51, 57, 71, 76, 80, 87.
- Light Anti-Aircraft Regiments [54 40mm Guns]: 11, 13, 14, 26, 39, 47, 52, 53, 56, 74.
- Coast Regiment: 574 [headquarters only].
- Anti-Aircraft Operations Rooms: 1, 2, 53.
- Light Anti-Aircraft Batteries: 168/56, 224/31.

**Armoured Force:**

- 1 Canadian Armoured Brigade
  - Headquarters
  - 11, 12, and 14 Canadian Armoured Regiments
- 23 Armoured Brigade
  - Headquarters
  - 40 Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment [Salerno-Volturno]
  - 46 Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment [Winter Line-Garigliano]
  - Royal Scots Greys (2d Dragoons) [tank battalion]
  - 11 Battalion, King's Royal Rifle Corps
  - 46 Battalion, Reconnaissance Regiment<sup>6</sup>
- 50 Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment
- 12/5 Lancers [tank battalion]
- 2 Forward Tank Delivery Squadron, Royal Armoured Corps

**Engineers:**

- Survey Companies: 46 (South African Expeditionary Corps), 49, 517.
- Tunneling Company: 1 (Canadian) [Anzio].

**Field Artillery:**

- Army Groups Royal Artillery (AGRA): 1, 2, 6, 7, 10.
- Super Heavy Regiment RA [8-inch Gun]: 54 [11 and 12 Batteries].
- Heavy Regiment RA [16 7.2-inch Gun/Howitzers]: 56.
- Heavy Regiments RA [8 7.2-inch Gun/Howitzers; 8 155mm Guns]: 61, 75.
- Medium Regiments RA [16 5.5-inch Gun/Howitzers]: 4, 5, 17, 18, 58, 74, 75, 78, 102, 178.
- Medium Regiments RA [8 5.5-inch Gun/Howitzers; 8 4.5-inch Guns]: 51, 69.
- Medium Regiments RA [16 4.5-inch Guns]: 2, 66, 76, 80.
- Army Field Regiments RA [24 105mm Howitzers Self-Propelled]: 24, 98.
- Army Field Regiments RA [24 25-pounders]: 23, 57, 78, 111, 121, 142, 146.
- Field Regiment RA (Newfoundland) [24 25-pounders]: 166.
- Anti-Tank Regiment RA [48 6-pounders]: 57, 105.

## TROOP LIST OF FIFTH ARMY

Survey Regiments RA: 3, 5 [detachment], 8.  
 Air Observation Post Squadrons: 654, 655.  
 Meteorological Section (RAF): 127.

**Infantry:**

Special Service Brigade: 2.  
 Commandos: 2, 9, 10, 43.  
 Royal Marine Commandos: 40, 41.  
 4/13 Battalion, Frontier Force Rifles  
 2/4 Battalion, Hampshire Regiment  
 Jaipur Infantry  
 Company C, 1 Battalion (22) Cheshire Regiment

**Miscellaneous:**

Area: 59.  
 Beach Groups: 3, 4, 21.  
 Brick: 35.  
 No. 1 "A" Force Field Section [secret operations]  
 "Q" Air Liaison Section (Photo Reconnaissance Unit)  
 719 Air Support  
 7 Army Air Support Control  
 Detachment, Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre (CSDIC)  
 Detachment A, Field Press Censor Section

**Signals:**

Cipher Sections: 31, 85.  
 Signal Corps Intelligence Unit: 3.  
 Special Liaison Detachment (Cipher): 1.  
 Special Wireless Sections: 3, 105.  
 Wireless Sections: 55 [detachment], 79 [detachment].  
 Wireless Telegraphy Intercept Sections: 21, 44, 52, 106.

**FRENCH TROOPS****French Increment, Headquarters Fifth Army****French Expeditionary Corps****1st Motorized Infantry Division****Headquarters****1st Marine Reconnaissance Battalion****1st Engineer Battalion****1st Artillery Regiment**

1st, 2d, and 3d Battalions [105mm Howitzer]

4th Battalion [155mm Howitzer]

**1st Medical Battalion****9th Ordnance Maintenance Company****1st Quartermaster Company****1st Signal Company**

- 1st Motorized Infantry Brigade**
  - 1st Motorized Infantry Battalion
  - 2d Motorized Infantry Battalion
  - 22d Motorized North African Infantry Battalion
- 2d Motorized Infantry Brigade**
  - 4th Motorized Infantry Battalion
  - 5th Motorized Infantry Battalion
  - 11th Motorized Infantry Battalion
- 4th Motorized Infantry Brigade**
  - 21st Motorized Infantry Battalion
  - 24th Motorized Infantry Battalion
  - Pacific-Marine Motorized Infantry Battalion
- 2d Moroccan Infantry Division**
  - Headquarters
  - 3d Spahi Reconnaissance Battalion (Moroccan)
  - 41st AAA Automatic Weapons Battalion
  - 87th Engineer Battalion
  - 63d Algerian Artillery Regiment
    - 1st, 2d, and 3d Battalions [105mm Howitzer]
    - 4th Battalion [155mm Howitzer]
  - 9th Medical Battalion
  - 7th Ordnance Company
  - 9th Quartermaster Company
  - 87/84 Signal Company
  - 187th Truck Company
  - 4th Moroccan Infantry Regiment
  - 5th Moroccan Infantry Regiment
  - 8th Moroccan Infantry Regiment
- 3d Algerian Infantry Division**
  - Headquarters
  - 3d Spahi Reconnaissance Battalion (Algerian)
  - 37th AAA Automatic Weapons Battalion
  - 83d Engineer Battalion
  - 67th Algerian Artillery Regiment
    - 1st, 2d, and 3d Battalions [105mm Howitzer]
    - 4th Battalion [155mm Howitzer]
  - 3d Medical Battalion
  - 3d Ordnance Company
  - 3d Quartermaster Company
  - 83/84 Signal Company
  - 183d Truck Company
  - 3d Algerian Infantry Regiment
  - 4th Tunisian Infantry Regiment
  - 7th Algerian Infantry Regiment
- 4th Moroccan Mountain Division**
  - Headquarters
  - 4th Spahi Reconnaissance Battalion (Moroccan)
  - 33d AAA Automatic Weapons Battalion
  - 82d Engineer Battalion

**69th Algerian Artillery Regiment**

1st, 2d, and 3d Battalions [75mm Howitzer]

**8th Medical Battalion****8th Ordnance Company****8th Quartermaster Company****88/84 Signal Company****188th Transport Company****1st Moroccan Infantry Regiment****2d Moroccan Infantry Regiment****6th Moroccan Infantry Regiment****1st, 3d, and 4th Groups of Tabors****Antiaircraft Artillery:**

AAA Automatic Weapons Battalions: 21st, 32d, 34th, 40th.

**Engineers:**

Engineer Combat Group: 101st [2d Battalion only].

Pioneer Regiments: 201st, 202d.

Engineer Battalion: 180th.

Geographic Section: 2d.

**Field Artillery:**

Régiment d'Artillerie Coloniale du Levant [155mm Gun]

**64th Algerian Artillery Regiment**

1st, 2d, and 3d Battalions [105mm Howitzer]

Naval Battery [155mm GPF Gun]

**Medical:**

Evacuation Hospitals: 401st, 405th, 415th.

Field Hospitals: 422d, 425th.

Mobile Surgical Formations: 1st, 2d, 3d.

Ambulance Company: 531st.

Sanitary Company: 531st.

Hygiene Sections: 472d, 473d.

Veterinary Ambulance Companies: 541/1, 542/1.

Advance Medical Supply Depot: 541/3.

**Military Police:**

Traffic Control Company: 521/1.

**Ordnance:**

Maintenance Battalion: 651st.

Ammunition Companies: 631st, 632d.

Ordnance Medium Maintenance Companies: 1st, 2d, 654/3.

Stores Companies: 611th, 612th.

**Quartermaster:**

Quartermaster Headquarters Administration: 311th.

Administration Overhead Company: 381st.

Quartermaster Class I Depot: 325th.  
Subsistence Depot: 323d.  
Quartermaster Bakery Group: 349th.  
Mobile Bakery: 352d.  
Bakery Section: 310th.  
Gas Supply and Transport Company: 702d.  
Meat Supply Companies: 302d, 332d.  
Petrol Companies: 703d, 704th.

**Signal:**

Signal Depot Company: 810/1.  
Signal Lines Construction Companies: 806/1, 806/3.  
Signal Operating Company: 807/1.  
Signal Radio and Telegraph Unit: 808/1.  
Telegraph Unit: 809/1.

**Tank Destroyer:**

Tank Destroyer Battalions: 7th, 8th.

**Transportation:**

Regulator Companies: Zone 2 and Zone 3.  
Transport Group: 501st [less 2 companies].  
Transport Companies: 283/25, 502/21.  
Pack Mule Companies: 14th, 15th, 17th—22d.

### ITALIAN UNITS

**1st Italian Motorized Group [Winter Line]<sup>7</sup>**

Headquarters  
67th Infantry Regiment  
51st Bersaglieri Battalion  
5th Antitank Battalion  
11th Artillery Regiment  
51st Engineer Battalion  
244th Field Hospital

**Legnano Combat Group**

Headquarters  
Legnano Ordnance Field Park  
Legnano Mechanical Workshop  
34th and 51st Carabinieri Sections  
51st Supply and Transport Company  
51st Engineer Battalion  
51st Medical Battalion  
11th Artillery Regiment [32 25-pounders].  
52d British Liaison Unit  
244th and 332d Field Hospitals  
68th Infantry Regiment  
69th Special Infantry Regiment

**Engineers:<sup>8</sup>**

Engineer Combat Group: 210th.  
 Engineer Battalions: 23d, 103d (Minatori), 910th.  
 Engineer Companies: 1st, 12th, 21st (Pontieri), 101st (Pontieri), 210th, 909th.  
 Engineer Depot Companies: 301st—306th.  
 Engineer Maintenance Companies: 301st, 302d.  
 Engineer Topographic Platoon: 210th.

**Medical:**

Field Hospitals: 525th, 865th.  
 Veterinary Hospitals: 110th, 130th, 210th, 211th, 212th.  
 Medical Collecting Section: 152d.

**Miscellaneous:**

Training Regiment: 525th.  
 Pack Mule Training Center  
 Alpini Instructor Detachment

**Quartermaster:**

Quartermaster Groups: 67th, 548th.  
 Quartermaster Battalions: 301st—306th.  
 Quartermaster Service Companies: 301st—325th.  
 Quartermaster Truck Companies: 1022d, 1023d.

**Signal:**

Wire Recovery Companies: 1st, 2d.

**Transportation:**

Pack Mule Groups: 2d, 20th.  
 Pack Mule Battalions: 1st—5th.  
 Pack Mule Companies: 1st, 2d, 4th, 5th, 9th—13th, 15th—21st.  
 Mule Pack Sections: 30th, 31st.

**NOTES TO APPENDIX 3**

<sup>1</sup>This troop list of Fifth Army in Italy, 9 September 1943-2 May 1945, is arranged by nationalities—American, Brazilian, British (including Dominions and Empire), French, and Italian. Within each nationality the corps and divisions are given first; other units are grouped by arm or service in alphabetical order. In the American, French, and Brazilian sections the listings are as complete as possible; in the British and Italian sections limitations of space and incomplete information have forced a curtailment of the minor service units, but not of the combat troops. Since some units were materially reorganized during their service in Italy, there is a small amount of duplication in the following list.

<sup>2</sup>Until July 1944 the 1st Armored Division contained the 81st Armored Reconnaissance Battalion together with the 6th Armored Infantry Regiment, the 1st and 13th Armored Regiments, and two combat commands.

<sup>3</sup>Corps service troops included the following types of units:

Royal Engineers—Field Parks, Army Field Companies, Workshops, Road Construction Companies, Stores Sections, GHQ Troops.  
 Medical—Casualty Clearing Stations, Field Dressing Stations, Field Surgical Units, Field Trans-

fusion Units, Field Hygiene Sections, Mobile Dental Units, Mobile Ophthalmic Units, Anti Malarial Control Units, Preventative Ablution Centres.  
*Ordnance*—Field Parks, Stores Convoys, Forward Ammunition Sections, Mobile Bath Units, Mobile Officers Shops, Mobile Ammunition Laboratory.

*Pay*—Field Cash Office.

*Pioneer* (Indian, Mauritius, and South African).

*Postal*.

*Provost*.

*Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers*—Workshops, Recovery Sections.

*Salvage*.

*Service Troops (Royal Army Service Corps)*—Transport Companies, Artillery Companies, Bridge Companies, Tipper Companies, Detail Issue Depots, Petrol Depots, Ambulance Convoys, Water Tank Companies, Mobile Laundry Companies.

*Signals*.

For further details the reader is referred to the Troop Lists in the nine volumes of the *Fifth Army History*.

<sup>4</sup>In addition to the elements listed above, British divisions also had all or part of the following: Royal Engineers, Royal Signals, Royal Army Service Corps, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Ordnance Field Park, Provost Company, Field Cash Office, Postal Unit, Field Security Section, Anti Malarial Control Unit, Bulk Issues Store, Pioneers, Field Hygiene Section, Field Surgical Unit, Mobile Dental Unit and one Ambulance Company per brigade.

<sup>5</sup>At Anzio; in Gothic Line, the 93 Anti-Tank Regiment.

<sup>6</sup>Also Royal Signals, Royal Army Service Corps, Ordnance Field Park, Provost Company, Ambulance Company, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Royal Engineers, attached artillery and antitank units.

<sup>7</sup>When attached to the FEC in February-March 1944, this Group had the 68th Infantry Regiment instead of the 67th Infantry Regiment; and in addition the 29th and 33d Bersaglieri Battalions, the 185th Parachute Battalion, the Arditi Battalion, and service units.

<sup>8</sup>The following service units were mostly organized on American lines (US-ITI units) early in 1945 and included in part personnel from a variety of other Italian units used by Fifth Army throughout 1944. These service troops were largely under Headquarters, 210th Italian Infantry Division, and for supervision from 11 February 1945 under the 2695th Technical Supervision Regiment.

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## APPENDIX 4

# ALLIED MILITARY GOVERNMENT<sup>1</sup>

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The task of military government in Fifth Army was an exceedingly difficult one. There were no precedents, no approved methods, no short cuts and a few directives. In Fifth Army, military government was an Allied organization, with many British officers and men serving beside their American counterparts. There were, therefore, obvious difficulties incident to the administration of a body responsible to two nations, each with different military regulations and customs. There were officers and enlisted men not only of every branch of the U.S. and British Armies, but of the navies, air forces and marines of each. The United States Public Health Service, the United States Coast Guard, and the Indian Medical Service were represented; also, personnel of France, Brazil, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, India, and several British Colonies.

A picture of what Allied Military Government faced when Naples was liberated by Fifth Army may be taken as illustrative of the vastness of its problem. Naples, about the size of Boston, is the center of an area comparable in population to New England. Here is a paragraph from the formal report of the period:

"At the time of our arrival the city was in darkness, lacking all artificial illumination, even candles; there was no electric power or gas, no sewage disposal, means of collecting refuse, or facilities to bury the dead. There were no air raid signals, telephones, ambulance service, fire protection, telegraph or postal service. There were no street cars, buses, taxis, or funiculars so necessary in this city on the side of a mountain. Police organization had broken down and after days of terror there was almost a state of anarchy. Water was so scarce that each person had no more than a quart per day, and that carried by hand, for the main water distribution system had been wrecked. Many people actually suffered from thirst. Hospitals had been despoiled of their equipment and supplies. The library and other parts of the ancient University of Naples and the thousand-year-old National Archives were but smouldering ruins. No schools were open. Courts were not functioning. The great port, second largest in Italy, had been almost wholly destroyed. All banks were closed and the city's financial system was at a standstill. There was filth in the streets and all shops had been stripped. Food was almost unobtainable and people were starving. The wanton burning of all stocks of coal, wood and charcoal made it almost impossible for families to cook even the little food that remained. Bodies of civilian patriots [partisans] who had been shot for resisting the Germans and Fascists had not been allowed burial and lay in the streets in the hot sunshine. Looting was prevalent. The Germans had opened the doors of all twelve prisons of Naples and criminals were set free to prey upon the public. Cases of typhoid fever were increasing in number and an epidemic of gigantic proportions was all too probable. All these things were added to the widespread destruction of private and public buildings. Despair was everywhere. The Fascist mayor had fled and the Prefect had betrayed his people. Such was the Naples left by the retreating Germans."

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<sup>1</sup>The following material is taken from official sources and was not prepared by the editor.

For the sake of comparison, the report given by AMG thirty days later is quoted:

"In one month the picture was vastly changed. Electric power had returned. There was an ample supply of good water, even though for the first week or so the source was in German hands, so that the work of reparation was delayed. The streets were cleaned. Drains were again working properly. Refuse was regularly removed. The dead were buried. Air raid signals were once more in order, and air raid shelters, previously indescribably filthy, were clean. Telephone service had been, in part, restored. Civil hospitals were refurnished and in good working order, with necessary ambulance service. A limited number of taxis were again on the streets, and arrangements were nearly perfected for restoring street car and funicular services. An efficient public safety system was in operation, making use of all three of the Italian police forces. Fire fighting equipment was again on hand, though in limited amount. Once again banks were open, and without restriction, despite the fears of some that re-opening would be followed by a run. We were supplying food to the people daily—not indeed all that they wished, but at least there was no actual want. Such food came from Allied sources beyond Italy and from indigenous grain and other farm products. Our agricultural officer constantly worked on this problem. Fuel for cooking had been brought in, and a stock was being accumulated for heating the houses, soon to become necessary. Shops were open. Law courts were functioning. Buildings were, in many instances, being repaired and often already in use. More than half of the liberated convicts had been recaptured and returned to prison. The port of Naples under efficient military control, was once again in operation under the Peninsular Base Section. By modern scientific methods the threatened epidemic of typhoid had been avoided."

During Fifth Army's Allied Military Government of Naples there occurred a little known but important event which might have seriously hindered Allied operations—the epidemic of typhus fever in the winter of 1943-44. The success which attended the fight against this scourge is a milestone in modern epidemiology. This terrible disease (not to be confused with typhoid fever) which through the ages has been associated with war and privation could, if unchecked, have stopped military operations, as it did many wars of the past, including the campaigns of World War I in Serbia and Poland. Thanks to the skillful use of DDT—its first real large-scale test—the epidemic was actually stopped. In all human history this never had been done before. Previously, there had been successful efforts to limit typhus epidemics in extent and time, but in Naples it was stopped short. Not one soldier of Fifth Army contracted the disease. This achievement alone would have justified the effort and expense of Fifth Army's AMG.

When Rome was taken by Fifth Army, Allied Military Government began to operate immediately. This was the first European capital ever captured by United States troops, and the first taken by the Allies in the war. In the words of the Allied Commission's booklet on military government in Italy: "Allied troops entered Rome on June 4, 1944. In the small hours of the morning the Fifth Army was installed in the Eternal City . . . AMG functioned without a hitch and the occupation of Rome has been termed the smoothest in military government history."

Allied Military Government of Fifth Army governed some forty million people and 175,000 square kilometers (67,000 square miles). This represents more than seventy-five per cent of the population and sixty per cent of the territory of the Italian Peninsula. Of the eighty-two provinces of continental Italy, Fifth Army's AMG governed fifty-one. Such was the vast area in which Fifth Army operated.

At the end of the war Fifth Army's AMG was in charge of governing the *compartimenti* or regions of Tuscany, Liguria, Tridentine Venezia, Lombardy, Piedmont and the greater part of Emilia and Venezia, with a population of twenty-three million and an area of 145,000 square kilometers (56,000 square miles).

AMG's strength was small. During the two years of its work it was assigned 288 officers (178 American and 110 British) and 301 enlisted men (211 American and 90 British). At no one time were there more than 125 officers and 190 men present for duty. However, a varying number of officers and men who were assigned for duty with the several regions of Italy, were attached to Fifth Army's AMG by the Allied Commission. It was the practice to work such personnel into military government duties so that they could take over when the Army moved forward.

With this relatively small group, the Allied Military Government of three-quarters of one of the most important countries in Europe was carried on to the end of the war. From the initial landing below Salerno to the final surrender of the enemy and the occupation of all of Northern Italy, Fifth Army's AMG played its part, one which must be reckoned as one of the major accomplishments of World War II.

Here follows a list of some of the many and diverse duties of Fifth Army's AMG:

Supervising finances, including reopening in record time all banks, they having been closed during German occupation.

Conducting courts of law (Inferior, Superior and General Courts) and administering justice thereunder. Among the duties of the highest of these courts was the trial of spies and other capital offenders.

Safeguarding the health of the people (including the successful handling of the typhus fever epidemic in Naples in 1943-44).

Preserving order through the national and local Italian police (including the training of over ten thousand *Carabinieri*). *Carabinieri* were taken forward with the advancing Army and in no case was the setting up of police system of a town delayed for as long as one day.

Acquisition of some 150,000 civilian laborers required by the Allies.

The protection of archives and works of art and monuments, not only by proper placarding and guarding but by giving advance information to the Air Corps, whereby it was possible to spare valuable works or art during bombings.

The restoration of badly damaged and world-famous treasures such as the Campo Santo of Pisa.

The discovery of the most priceless of Florentine paintings and sculpture carried away by the Germans and recovered near the Austrian frontier, followed by their packing and return to Florence.

The supervision of agriculture, including the planting of crops and the transfer of food products from one area to another.

The rebuilding of roads and bridges. This included constructing bridges to replace Bailey bridges first installed by Army engineers but later removed for military use elsewhere. Without such replacement some towns and villages would have been utterly inaccessible.

The restoration of public utilities, such as telephone, telegraph and postal services, as well as the reconditioning of electric power, gas and water works.

The reopening and administration of educational institutions from the primary grades to and including fourteen great universities.

The care of Allied property heretofore held by the enemy. Thus millions of dollars were saved to American and other Allied persons and corporations.

The evacuation of nearly twenty thousand inhabitants of the Anzio beach-head, when this became militarily necessary, without a single casualty.

The restoring and rebuilding of industries and commerce. Several of Italy's few sources of commercial revenue were thus made profitable.

The care of much captured enemy matériel. This included all of the enormous stocks that fell into Allied hands with the German collapse.

The welfare of the general population (including supervision of work of the American, British and Italian Red Cross personnel).

The establishment of at least one hospital for each province and each large town.

Reopening of synagogues in the cities in Fifth Army's area and insuring Jewish people freedom of religion.

Supervision of the removal of more than a quarter of a million land mines left by the enemy.

Aiding nearly a thousand Italians to escape through a sewer from a German prison camp near Florence, during which several AMG personnel were killed or wounded by machine-gun fire.

Dealing with the Partisans, and providing food and shelter for this large and very difficult group.

The collection of two hundred thousand weapons from Partisans.

The averting of two extensive general strikes (Naples and Florence) which would have been of serious import at the height of the respective campaigns.

Successful arbitration between labor and capital in Turin and Milan, whereby factories continued in operation.

Preservation and distribution of many millions of dollars' worth of property of all kinds, including money and jewels, that had been assembled by the enemy for removal to Germany.

Delicate diplomatic relations with the French military authorities in zones in which they were in unauthorized occupation.

The regulation of the movements and care of several hundred thousand refugees and displaced persons of many nationalities.

Investigation and removal of Fascists from public office.

The reconstruction of the various forms of transportation.

Care of property and personnel after the 1944 eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

The supplying of all Allied military currency for the pay of the armed forces in this theater.

The provision of personnel and matériel for the restoration of the ports of Naples, Piombino, Leghorn and Genoa for use by the British and United States navies.

The setting up not only of AMG but actual military command of the

islands near Naples (Capri, Ischia and Ventotene).

The making of arrangements for the housing of enemy diplomats accredited to Fascist Italy and to the Vatican State.

Maintaining normal AMG functions with Allied personnel assigned to French, Brazilian and Italian military commands under Fifth Army.

The recovery and deposit to Italian credit of eight and a half billion lire which had been placed in Italian banks by German Government accounts.

The careful search in the ruins of the Colombaria Library of Florence, Italy's greatest source of medieval manuscripts, which was wrecked by the withdrawing Germans, and recovery of seventy per cent of the rarest material. This irreplaceable collection would otherwise have been a total loss. Some of the manuscripts were actually recovered from the Arno River.

The delivery of drinking water, distilled from the bay, to people throughout Naples during the first fortnight of our occupation. It was their only supply.

Transportation and medical care of ten thousand sick and wounded Italian civilians, many helpless, returning to Italy from German concentration camps.

The creation of an institution for manufacture of serums and vaccines for the Italian people.

The gigantic task of feeding the people must be stressed particularly. While the amount of food was determined by Allied policy and by transportation facilities from abroad, it was a matter of pride to AMG that never once did it fail to provide daily food to every person in Fifth Army's area. Nearly all of the great cities of Italy were administered by AMG of Fifth Army, including Naples, Rome, Florence, Bologna, Milan, Turin and Genoa, the last three of which represent the centers of Italian finance and commerce. About ninety per cent of Italy's industrial wealth was in Fifth Army's area.

An undertaking of the extent and scope of Fifth Army's AMG may also be judged fairly by more remote results. By that standard, too, the organization well justified its inception. Appointments were made with such care that Italian office-bearers put into important offices by Fifth Army's AMG were retained by the Italian electorate when power was returned to them. Such appointments survived the general elections, the change in Italy's government from a monarchy to a republic, and even the disorders fomented by subversive elements within as well as outside of Italy. For instance, the five thousand *Carabinieri* brought into Rome by AMG of Fifth Army to replace Mussolini's Fascist police, are still (1948) on duty in the Italian capital. Many other AMG appointees are still carrying on their functions as prefects, mayors, university presidents, and so on. There is, perhaps, no better way for an occupied land to show its approval of a foreign administration. This making of lasting Italian friends for Fifth Army and the nations it represented, was itself no mean contribution to the winning of the peace, as it had been to the winning of the war.

Here is General Clark's official statement regarding AMG in Italy:

"Throughout the entire period of the Fifth Army's service in Italy, Allied Military Government has been one of its integral parts. AMG personnel have been attached to the several corps and divisions, British, French and Brazilian as well as American. These AMG officers and men have been exposed to the same dangers and hardships as other men of our combat units. Some have lost their lives, some have been disabled by wounds, others were captured. Not a few have been awarded combat decorations of each of the countries represented."

"The plans made by the AMG personnel at Fifth Army Headquarters have proven sound and their execution efficient. The army command has never had to concern itself with problems of civil government, which would inevitably have been a serious burden had AMG failed. Thus, AMG played an important part in the successive advances of the Fifth Army. In the cities of Salerno, Naples, Rome, Siena, Pisa, Florence, Lucca, and Pistoia in turn, as well as in numerous smaller cities and towns, the Fifth Army's AMG has created effective government. All of these cities had known the ravage of war and the destruction caused by a ruthless foe. The inhabitants were, as a rule, all but starving; public utilities were wrecked; banks and courts were closed; political unrest was widespread; educational institutions and art centers were either ruined or closed. So effective have been the efforts of AMG that these conditions were corrected within a remarkably brief time. Refugees have received special care. In the Anzio beachhead alone, more than twenty thousand were transported out of the combat area without a single casualty. Allied Military Government has earned the gratitude of the United Nations for a distinct and important contribution to the winning of the war."

And, in conclusion, here is the statement of then Under Secretary of War, the Honorable Robert P. Patterson, who saw AMG work during his several visits of inspection:

"In no theater of war was the work of military government more important than with the Fifth Army in Italy. The mission was a difficult one, with a population recently hostile and still of divided sentiments. The machinery of local government had broken down, and local resources were conspicuous by their absence. Nevertheless, the work was done. The field commanders were relieved of concern over civilian affairs in the rear, and could concentrate on operations at the front. Over and above that, the work had its lasting value in relief of suffering and in the building of confidence, respect, and gratitude by the Italian people toward our own people."

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